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ABSTRACT

This document contains testimonies from witnesses and prepared statements from the Congressional hearing called to examine the exploitation of runaway children and adolescents. Opening statements are included from Senators Hawkins, Dodd, and Grassley which briefly describe runaway statistics, the dangers faced by runaways, and efforts to help runaways. The testimony of Dorcas Hardy from the Department of Health and Human Services describes parts of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program that relate to runaways being exploited sexually and used by drug dealers. Other testimonies are included from Cheryl McCall who produced "Streetwise" a film about runaways; June Bucy, the executive director of the National Network of Runaway and Youth Services, Inc.; William H. Bentley, the executive director of the Florida Network of Youth and Family Services; Susan G. Gehring, the coordinator of the Iowa Runaway, Homeless, and Missing Youth Prevention Education Center; and John Cottrell, the associate director of youth services at the Council of Churches. Witnesses attest to the horrors that face runaways; stress the runaways' need for shelters, counseling, and medical help; and describe various programs and shelters established to help and protect these children and adolescents. Additional materials in this document include the prepared statement of Sara Jarvis, the director of the Southeastern Network of Runaway Youth and Family Services, Inc.; a Washington Post-Parade report on why children run away; and "To Whom Do They Belong?", a profile of America's runaway and homeless youth and the programs that help them. (NRB)

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EXPLOITATION OF RUNAWAYS

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HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CHILDREN, FAMILY, DRUGS AND ALCOHOLISM

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND HUMAN RESOURCES UNITED STATES SENATE

NINETY-NINTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

EXAMINING ALTERNATIVE WAYS TO SERVE RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTHS

OCTOBER 1, 1985

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EXPLOITATION OF RUNAWAYS

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1985

U.S. SENATE, SUBCOMMITTEE ON CHILDREN, FAMILY, DRUGS AND ALCOHOLISM, COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND HUMAN RESOURCES,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:07 a.m., in room SD-628, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator Paula Hawkins (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Senators Hawkins and Dodd.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR HAWKINS

Senator HAWKINS. Good morning.

We welcome you to this hearing on the subject of the exploitation of runaway children.

The dilemmas and dangers faced by runaway and homeless children are little understood in this country. It is my hope that the testimony here today will shed light on this grave problem and draw greater attention to the need for additional funding for support facilities and training of staff and volunteers at these facilities that serve runaway and homeless youth.

The number of children that run away from home each year boggles the imagination. It is estimated that between 1 and 4 million children run away from home each year. Many are driven from the home by physical or sexual abuse or some other long-term family problems. In my home State of Florida, approximately 3,000 children run away over the course of a single month. That is 20,000 a year.

The children testify that they are often driven from their homes by intolerable or dangerous situations. However, it is very difficult to predict the alternative life these children expect to discover on the streets. Unfortunately, it is very easy to find out the true discoveries of the gutters, sewers, and brothels of our cities.

Runaway and throwaway children are at risk; pornographers, prostitutes, pimps, and predators prey upon our vulnerable youth. Their malignant design endangers the safety of all runaway children, and we must intervene to help these children, and we must do it now.

Children on the street discover assault and death. Children on the street become dependent on alcohol and drugs. If they are like the witnesses from the Oscar-nominated documentary, "Streetwise," our children discover predators who prey upon defenseless youngsters, and our children discover prostitution and self-destruction. If they are extremely fortunate, our children discover good caring people who operate runaway and youth shelter services and who provide them with food, medical assistance, and a safe place to stay.

I am proud to say that there are thousands of dedicated Americans who volunteer their time and money to help protect runaway children. These able and dedicated people are trained professionals who can make a difference in the lives of our runaway children.

Innocent children have been saved by these excellent shelters and institutions. More innocent children can be saved from the dangers of the streets. But there are just too few organizations working on this problem; there is just too little money, too little Federal interest, too little State interest, and very little local support for our children.

Professionals, people armed with proper skills and sufficient funds, can make a difference. Shelters across the country report great success with runaway youth; nationwide, 57 percent of all children who find refuge in shelters are eventually reunited with their families or placed in a safe living environment. But that is not enough. Our children need trained professionals, counselors adept in suicide prevention, in understanding the horrors of sexual abuse, of drug and alcohol abuse, and of school failure.

But I fear that there are just too few resources focused on this pressing issue. Last year, one shelter in Tucson, Arizona, turned away 1,600 children. A recent survey indicated that only 22 to 25 percent of the children who need medical services and shelter can get it because there are simply not enough funds, beds, or trained staff. Consequently, many of our children remain vulnerable to discovering the perils of the street.

We have excellent panels assembled today. I feel confident, that with the help of these people we will finally be able to discover our own solution to the dangers of the streets.

We will enter into the record at this point the opening statement of Senator Dodd and a statement by Senator Grassley.

[The statements of Senators Dodd and Grassley follow:]

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR DODD

Senator Dodd. This morning we focus on a critical issue facing hundreds of thousands of runaway children in this country: namely, the risk of exploitation. Some runaways are exploited sexually. They face the daily risks of serious physical abuse and sexually transmitted diseases in order to obtain food and shelter. Others are recruited as drug runners by adults attempting to manipulate the criminal justice system. As a rule, criminal penalties for children caught running illicit drugs are less stiff than those for adults. By offering a young runaway the chance to earn money for daily survival as a messenger, adult dealers in cocaine, heroin, and marijuana can escape the chance of being apprehended themselves.

We know that the vast majority of children who run away are leaving intolerable situations. Some have been physically or sexually abused. Others have been neglected and ignored by parents suffering from alcoholism or drug abuse. Yet others are throwaways: They are literally told to get out. Recent surveys indicate an alarming increase in the incidence of children being thrown out of their homes. Some surmise that 40 percent of all so-called runaway children are actually throwaways. In my State of Connecticut in 1981, 1,660 children were reported by the police as having run away. Close to 60 percent of these runaways were girls. Over the past few years, those numbers have increased.

All in all, in deciding to leave home, these young people are attempting to make rational, adult-like decisions. But what awaits most of them on the streets is all too often malnourishment, disease, physical and sexual abuse, and even death. Several thousand young people disappear each year in this country. Some are murdered. Others commit suicide. And for those runaways who turn to prostitution, there is now a risk of contracting the fatal disease AIDS.

The runaway shelters providing services to runaway youth and their families deserve much praise and recognition. I know we will learn much this morning. From the witnesses who represent these frontline agencies. I am especially looking forward to hearing the testimony of John Cottrell, associate director of the Greater Bridgeport Council of Churches Shelter in my State of Connecticut. He is overseeing a new program of street work, designed to reach those runaways who traditionally do not go to shelters: Namely, those already involved in drug running or prostitution.

But shelters in Connecticut, Florida, Iowa, and everywhere else need more than praise. They require support. Of some 525 runaway shelters across the country, only one-half are receiving Federal support under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act.

Just as importantly, we must work on other initiatives to curb adults from exploiting children by turning them toward prostitution or recruiting them as drug runners. For example, I am working with the Drug Enforcement Administration and with several colleagues on developing new ways to enforce stiff criminal penalties for those who send children out as drug delivery boys and girls. I hope that my distinguished colleague from Florida and the other members of this subcommittee will join me in this effort.

More work needs to be done on reaching chronic runaways, most of whom have had contact with social service agencies and have been labeled "failures." But professionals who work with these children in shelters and on the streets have had success. So, we must refashion foster care, special education programs, and other services to help reach these youngsters earlier. In the same manner, more support needs to be made available to shelters trying to provide aftercare for runaways who have been reunited with their families.

In closing, we ignore the warning signals of the recent report by the national network of runaway and homeless youth at our own peril. Of over 200 shelters surveyed by the network, close to one-third noted an increase in the number of sexually abused children coming to them. Close to 30 percent reported an increase in the physical abuse of runaway children seeking their aid. And 29 percent indicated that the incidence of alcohol and drug abuse is increasing among youth leaving home. I hope to join with my colleagues in renewed and greater efforts to combat these problems facing hundreds and thousands of American children.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR GRASSLEY

Senator GRASSLEY. Senator Hawkins, I commend you for focusing this hearing today on the exploitation of runaway children. I join in your commitment to child protection and have supported the many legislative efforts you have initiated to address problems of missing, exploited, and abused children.

We are all too familiar with what awaits children when they run away and try and survive in the streets. We are also familiar with reluctant police authorities in pursuing cases involving missing children, believing matters concerned with runaways or some other domestic dispute to be insignificant for their involvement.

But as we shall hear today, the chances of victimization is far too common. I have read recently that the statistical chances of being sexually victimized jumps from 30 percent at home, to 85 percent on the street if the child is a runaway. If arrested, the chances of being sexually victimized while in detention jumps from 85 to 100 percent. These figures are frightening.

We in this room know that no child who is abused is a mere statistic. Any legislative initiatives we pursue should take into account the predatory role of chicken hawks, pimps, and adult pedophiles these children may encounter in or out of jail. Furthermore, the problem of substance abuse can greatly complicate the sexual abuse situations in which these children find themselves. We also need to realize that runaways are symptomatic of family dysfunction.

Tragically, in my own State of Iowa, the current economic farm crisis has claimed many victims, not the least of which is the growing numbers of runaway youth and teen suicide. We are seeing a sevenfold increase of runaways in Iowa. These runaways are the most obvious and extreme evidence of the stress descending on our rural youth. They are reacting to emotional stress, physical abuse or the trauma of a failed family farm of business or perhaps to escape the chaos of an alcoholic family.

It is because of these problems in Iowa that I am pleased to welcome to this hearing today, Ms. Sue Gehring, coordinator of the Iowa Runaway, Homeless, and Missing Youth Prevention/Education Center which is connected with the Youth and Shelter Services, Inc., and the South Central Youth and Family Services. This network developed a system across its 17-county coverage area to identify, within their home communities, runaway youth and their families and to provide services within the very rural portions of that area.

Ms. Gehring, thank you for coming.

Senator HAWKINS. Our first witness is Dorcas Hardy, Assistant Secretary for Human Development Services, at the Department of Health and Human Services. She has brought with her Paget Wilson Hinch, the Associate Commissioner for Family and Youth Services.

We welcome you and look forward to your testimony.

STATEMENT OF DORCAS HARDY, ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, WASHINGTON, DC, ACCOMPANIED BY PAGET WILSON HINCH, ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FOR FAMILY AND YOUTH SERVICES

Ms. HARDY. Thank you, Senator. It is a pleasure to be here.

I would like to highlight parts of our Runaway and Homeless Youth Program that relate to your request for information on the vulnerability of young Americans to drug dealers and to those who would exploit them sexually.

As you know, the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program provides support and guidance to 273 youth centers or shelters across the country, in all of our States. In addition, we fund the National Runaway and Youth Suicide Switchboard, a nationwide, toll-free hotline that responds each year to more than 250,000 calls from troubled or runaway youth and from their parents.

Each center offers safety to our runaway and homeless youth. Basic services include short-term shelter for up to 2 weeks, and as you referred earlier, employment services, counselling, psychological services, et cetera.

Key to the centers' programs are outreach activities, which make youth aware of the centers and their services and get them off the streets. Of the roughly 300,000 children who are served by our centers, most of them, fortunately, are not runaways, not yet. They are very troubled youth who are attracted to the centers by their outreach activities.

Another about 70,000 of them are runaways or homeless, and they do receive overnight shelter as well as counseling and other services. About 25 percent of them stay up to 3 nights; however, the majority of the youth have run fewer than 10 miles from home, and about one-quarter of the youth have run between two and five times previously.

Fourteen percent of our youth who receive shelter, about 10,000 young people, indicated that they had been pushed out of their homes, under their definition. However, about 1,600—only about 1,600—were ultimately unable to return home because their parents would not accept their presence. So we have many, we believe, successes to report.

About 90 percent of the youth who enter the shelters are reunited with their families, or guardians, or are placed in another family-type setting. We have another 6 percent or so who are placed in boarding schools or other institute. But it is that 7 percent of our youth who are receiving services in the shelters who do return to the streets.

The outreach programs have been a real critical component of the centers' work, and as they deal with the street youth directly, and they are located in many places, in what we call combat zones, or wherever juvenile prostitutes might be found or congregate.

In many communities, those persons who most often come in contact with runaway youth—whether they are bus terminal employees, whether they are police, travelers aid—are briefed on the location and services of our shelters, and we work closely with them. Those youth who do stay out on the street are very likely to encounter sexual exploitation, to be introduced to drugs, and the purpose of our centers' outreach centers is to reach these kids before they are caught up in the street life or become victims of pimps or drug pushers.

Both youth who use hard drugs or engage in prostitution are among, clearly, the most difficult to treat, but we believe we have a critical role. We are trying to get the serious victims started on the road to permanent recovery, through initial support in the form of shelter, medical care, and counseling, and especially those who are drug dependent.

The staff and the volunteers are very well-trained and, we believe, are certainly equal to the task. Many centers often use peer counselors, young people, usually volunteers who have been given extensive training. Some of them are former runaways themselves and they can clearly gain the confidence of the kids.

The problems of sexual exploitation, prostitution, pornography especially, is most acute in the big cities. Our centers are certainly well aware of the problem, and we have devised a number of specific solutions.

As I said, shelters are often located in the tough areas of town, near bus stations, red light districts, and where the kids are going to fall into bad hands.

One particular example—and it will be shown in the film, "Streetwise"—is Orion House in Seattle, WA. We have been very supportive of them, and I am sure you will get further testimony. But basically, counselors are out there on the streets at night; they are working with the kids; they provide them emergency shelter and preventive medical care and emergency medical care, food, clothing, counseling. And having visited Orion and been out there in Seattle, I think it is an excellent program.

We have also tried in the last 3 years to develop special efforts in the area of sexually exploited runaway and homeless kids. We have funded several agencies in New York City, the human resources department, the police department and the youth bureau, all to work together on how we can get these kids, first, off the streets, and second, to turn them toward a better lifestyle. That has also been in conjunction with the Trailways Program, which I know you are familiar with, Operation Home Free, where if you are going home, you can get a free bus ride home.

We have also been active at Project LUCK, out in Portland, OR. Again, the kids have been taken off the streets and put into safer environments. At the end of that crisis period out in Oregon, we found that 80 percent of the kids were still in the program 3 months later, and they have a good prognosis for permanent turnaround. So we have had some very good successes.

Another example has been working with the National Association of Counties. They have spread out into three areas—Rochester, Baltimore, and the Metro Miami/Dade County area. In Miami, we have worked closely with the police department and social workers in that area, and a police member of the team goes out after the pimp or the adult who is purchasing the services of the juvenile and the social worker is there to help the kids. NACO is seeing that all these projects spread out through their county network, and we are real pleased about that.

We have also this year taken on some special projects in the area of dealing with kids who have been abused, sexually abused at home, who come into the shelters and some additional training of our staff through networking throughout the country.

I would like to just leave one positive note on this, though it is a tough subject, and tell you a story about Sarah. Sarah is a 14-year-old girl who was engaged in prostitution and who was first contacted on the streets of one of our larger cities by our shelter outreach team. She had started running away after having been sexually abused at the age of 10 by her stepfather. By the age of 14, she had been detained 15 times by the juvenile justice authorities of her city. She was no longer living with her mother and stepfather, but with her pimp, who abused her regularly.

She had a number of sexually transmitted diseases, used drugs moderately and alcohol heavily. The first conversation that Sarah had with her outreach workers was inconclusive, but after a few weeks, she started coming in for medical treatment, and after a few weeks more, she came to the shelter for 2 weeks to get away from her pimp.

Out of all this came her stopping using of drugs and alcohol. She started counseling, and from the shelter she went into foster care with a single mother who provided a very safe environment.

There is a very positive end to this story. They are not always this way, but I think it is good news that Sarah is now 17½; she is still with her foster mother. She is looking at how to have a more independent living arrangement. She is still under counseling. She is free from any kind of alcohol and drug addiction, and she has completed her G.E.D., graduated from high school, and plans to enter junior college to prepare a certificate in clerical and office skills.

So there are some very good stories to tell.

Thank you, Senator.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Hardy follows:]

STATEMENT OF

DORCAS R. HARDY

ASSISTANT SECRETARY

FOR

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CHILDREN, FAMILY, DRUGS, AND ALCOHOLISM

COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND HUMAN RESOURCES

UNITED STATES SENATE

October 1, 1985

Senator Hawkins and members of the Subcommittee, I am Dorcas Hardy, Assistant Secretary for Human Development Services of the Department of Health and Human Services. I am delighted to have this opportunity to testify before your Subcommittee on Children, Family, Drugs, and Alcoholism. Accompanying me is Mrs. Paget Wilson Hinch, Associate Commissioner of the Administration for Children, Youth, and Families. Mrs. Hinch is in charge of the Family and Youth Services Bureau, which among other responsibilities manages the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program.

In my statement today, I will highlight those parts of the program related to your request for information on the vulnerability of young Americans to drug dealers and to those who would exploit them sexually.

I also wish to make several comments about the training and professional development of the counselors, including volunteers, in the youth shelters we fund and about our commitment to early prevention of youth problems as well as to treatment of already existing problems.

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Program now provides financial support and guidance to 273 youth centers or shelters across the country. These centers are found in all 50 States, in the

District of Columbia, and in the six associated U.S. Territories and Commonwealths in the Caribbean and the Pacific.

In addition, we fund the National Runaway and Youth Suicide Switchboard, a nationwide, toll-free hotline that responds each year to over 250,000 calls from troubled or runaway youth and from their parents.

Each center offers safety to runaway and homeless youth. Basic services include short-term shelter for up to two weeks, food, emergency medical checkups and care, counseling, and other educational, legal, and employment services and referrals.

Key to the centers' programs are outreach activities, which make youth aware of the centers and get the youth off the streets, and aftercare, which follows up with youth and their families and sees that the original problems are resolved.

Each year, about 300,000 troubled young people walk through the doors of these shelters to receive the full attention of committed, experienced, and professional counselors.

Of the roughly 300,000 youth who are served by the centers each year, most of them -- about 225,000 -- are not runaways, not yet. They are troubled youth who are attracted to the centers by their outreach activities, and the centers help these youth and their families to resolve problems before a runaway episode occurs.

Another 70,000 or so of these youth are runaways or homeless, and they receive overnight shelter as well as counseling and other services. We do not have specific figures on how long these children stay at the shelters -- but estimate about 25 percent stay one to three nights, and the remainder from four nights up to the two week maximum. The majority of the youth had run fewer than 10 miles from home. Nearly a quarter of the youth had run away between two and five times previously.

Fourteen percent of the youth who received shelter -- nearly 10,000 young people -- indicated that they had been "pushed out" of their homes. Whether a youth has been pushed out or is a "throwaway" depends in part on the youth's and the family's perception at the time. While as many as 10,000 initially said they had been pushed out, only about 1,600 were ultimately unable to return home because their parents would not accept their presence.

We are heartened to see that even in such extreme situations -- where a youth may have been pushed out by his or her family -- timely intervention and counseling can resolve the vast majority of these cases.

We estimate that there may be as many as 200 other runaway shelters in the country, in addition to the 273 which we fund, which are also providing crisis intervention services. If their experience is anything like that of the federally-funded shelters, then they are serving another 200,000 youth, of whom as many as 26,000 could be runaway and homeless youth in need of shelter.

We have many successes to report. Eighty-seven percent of the youth who enter the shelters are reunited with their families or guardians or are placed in other family-type settings. Another six percent are placed in boarding schools or other institutions.

The record still is not perfect. Seven percent of the youth receiving services in the shelters we fund return to the streets.

We do not have solid figures on how many of the youth seen at our centers have been sexually abused before they ran away. But the centers tell us that the proportion is on the rise, and we are working with them to give more emphasis to the needs of this special sub-population of runaway and homeless youth, and to clarify the dimensions of the problem.

The outreach programs of runaway youth centers are the first line of prevention, to keep young people off the streets, or to limit the time they are out on the street and vulnerable.

Outreach begins with publicity: in the schools, in areas where young people congregate, and at truck stops and PTA meetings and other places where adults who know of runaways can be informed of the services available.

About a third of the youth who come to the centers are self-referred, having learned of the availability of services from outreach publicity or by word of mouth from other youth. Others are referred by policy or by school systems.

But the most critical aspect of the centers' outreach program is their work with street youth who would not come to the centers on their own. Outreach activities include the use of street workers who go to areas where runaways congregate -- certain parks, or a "combat zone" where juvenile prostitutes are found, or the bus and train stations where runaways first arrive.

In major communities, those persons who most often come in contact with runaway youth -- bus terminal employees, police, Travelers Aid -- are briefed on the location and services of the nearest youth shelters. Elsewhere, the centers work with truck drivers and truck stop operators to identify runaway and homeless youth and refer them to a shelter.

What we do know is that runaway and homeless youth who stay out on the street are very likely to encounter sexual exploitation, or be introduced to drugs, or both. The purpose of the centers' outreach programs is to reach youth before they get caught up in street life, or become the victims of pimps or drug pushers.

A youth calling on the toll-free hotline is given the address and phone number of the nearest shelter and directions on how to get there. A call to the shelter elicits an offer of free transportation.

But coming into one of the shelters is voluntary. A number of runaway and homeless youth choose not to come -- and they are often the youth who are most in need.

Each runaway or homeless youth coming into one of the shelters is asked his or her reasons for leaving home and being on the streets. The most common reason given is difficulty in communicating with parents. Other reasons cited are poor self image, emotional or physical neglect by parents, and at times, abuse by parents and others.

In the minority of cases, the reasons are heavy drug use or a wish to escape from street prostitution.

Our experience is that services are most acceptable to those youth who have only recently run away or who have not run very far from home or who are merely thinking of running away. Our services are most acceptable to and effective for those youth who are not yet into hard drugs and prostitution.

However, the longer a youth lives on the streets, the more likely he or she is to become drug dependent or sexually exploited, and the less likely he or she is to accept an offer of help.

Though youth who use hard drugs or who engage in prostitution are among the most difficult to treat of all, we have a critical role.

This role is getting the serious victim started on the road to permanent recovery through our initial support in the form of shelter, medical care, counseling, and so forth. We make the start through initial crisis intervention and referral, but the long-term intervention is shared by other community agencies that give long-term support, such as centers specifically designed to counsel drug dependent youth.

The centers have a strong prevention focus and try to help troubled youth, before they get hopelessly entangled in drugs or prostitution. But if they are already in such profound trouble, we try to arrange the long-term services they need.

The staff and volunteers who work in the runaway and homeless youth centers are equal to the task. The staff are principally people trained in social work or counseling, and they receive additional training in the areas of youth and family counseling. Many centers also use peer counselors -- young people, usually volunteers, who are given extensive training and who are supervised by a professional counselor or social worker. Centers have also found it effective, in some cases, to use young people as outreach workers. Many of them are former runaways themselves, who can gain the confidence of street youth.

All shelter staff receive periodic in-service training to supplement their professional education and to help them sharpen their skills. The shelters also require volunteers to undergo an extensive training program. One can't just walk in off the street and become a volunteer at a runaway and homeless youth center. In addition to training, volunteers who work as counselors, house parents, and in other roles which bring them in contact with children are also screened to be sure they are suitable for youth work.

We have had no know instances of abuse by staff or volunteers of federally-funded centers, and we hope that through interviews, careful screening, and close supervision we can prevent any such occurrence.

In addition to specific training programs, over the last several years we have developed in each of the ten Federal regions a network composed of many of the best, most qualified counselors and staff members in each region. Through workshops, staff exchanges, newsletters, and computer bulletin boards, the experience of the best is shared across all the centers.

Also, we have begun a series of annual meetings with the leaders of these networks at which we determine the training needs of the staffs of individual centers. These training needs in turn will become the training programs of the ensuing year.

Improving outreach to prevent the exploitation of runaway and homeless youth, and counseling for youth who have been exploited, will be among the most important training and technical assistance topics in the coming year.

Another mechanism for dealing with problems such as sexual exploitation, separate from the training program, is through the Office of Human Development Services Coordinated Discretionary Program. As we learn of new services problems and issues, we use the discretionary program to develop new service models for use by our centers and other service providers.

Teen prostitution has been the subject of such demonstration programs in recent years, and as a result we have developed models for working with this most desperate segment of the youth population.

The problem of sexual exploitation of youth in all its forms -- prostitution and pornography especially -- is most acute in the big cities. Our centers in the big cities are well aware of the problem and we have devised a number of specific solutions. I would like to tell you of some of these in detail.

In the big cities, as a matter of course, our shelters are often located downtown, near bus stations, and even near red light districts. These are the neighborhoods where runaway and homeless youth often congregate, and also the neighborhoods where youth are most likely to fall into the hands of pimps and pornographers. By locating our centers in or near these areas, our staff are able to easily meet the youth and tell them of our services. Youth at risk are often able to walk to safety.

In the big cities, we have some of our most successful outreach programs, designed especially to reach this vulnerable population.

As one example among many, I cite Orion House in Seattle, Washington. The Orion House methods are repeated with modifications in many crowded urban areas across the country. Orion House has one of our most effective outreach programs.

Here, teams of two counselors, usually a man and a woman, are physically on the streets six nights a week until 11:00 p.m. or midnight. They work in the city center and the other downtown areas where youth congregate. By being on the street, highly visible, every night, they get to know the youth, and gradually gain their trust.

They explain the services Orion House offers: medical care, for example. Twice a week the outreach workers bring a mobile health unit to the street, dispensing bandaids, giving checkups and shots when needed, and even giving prenatal care, because many of the young women are pregnant.

They offer short term shelter, food, and clothing. They offer help in finding long-term shelter, and academic and employment counseling.

They also offer psychological counseling, because many of the youth have severe psychological problems resulting from their activities on the street, and also from the abusive family situations in which many of them were reared. The outreach workers try to catch the youth the very night they arrive on the street, and this sometimes happens.

With variations, we have many big city shelters comparable to Orion House. Their common characteristics are intensive outreach and the core services, such as short-term shelter and counseling, that get the youth started toward a new, safe lifestyle.

In addition to the services we offer through the 273 shelters we sponsor across the country, and of which I cite Orion House as an example, we have funded and continue to fund demonstration projects that deal specifically with the problems of sexual exploitation of youth. These are short-term projects in which we develop new methods of dealing with acute problems.

Since Fiscal Year 1982, OHDS has given special effort to developing service models to deal with problems of sexually-exploited runaway and homeless youth. For example, in 1984 we funded three cooperating agencies in New York City to combat juvenile prostitution, with an initial concentrated effort in the Times Square area. Through outreach workers on the streets, contacts are made with youth just starting as prostitutes but not yet fully committed to prostitution as a lifestyle.

The three New York City agencies -- the Department of Human Resources, the Police Department, and the Youth Bureau -- provide medical and social services, counseling, and in cooperation with "Operation Home Free" of Trailways, Inc., try to reunite the youth with their parents whenever possible. The collaboration has been successful in removing youth from the streets, in keeping youth out of the juvenile justice system, and also in getting youth back home.

Project LUCK is a three county collaboration based in Portland, Oregon designed to reduce juvenile prostitution and to get youth off the streets and into safe environments. In Portland, as in other large urban areas, homeless youth often engage in prostitution as the only way they see of surviving. The collaboration first of all provides short-term emergency services -- housing, food, medical care, clothing and transportation.

Those youth who make a commitment to try to leave this lifestyle -- about 10 percent -- are offered longer-term care with services provided by a network of social service agencies. Considerable success is reported. Of those youth who at the end of the crisis period make a commitment to change their lifestyle, 60 percent are still in the program three months later, with a good prognosis for a permanent turnaround.

Project LUCK also has an extensive public education program that has succeeded in alerting the entire Portland area to the existence of the problem, to the dangers for the youth involved, and to the availability of help.

In another example, a grant in 1984 to the National Association of Counties (NACO), which has over 2000 member counties and affiliates across the country, created three major demonstration sites to combat sexual exploitation of juveniles. The sites are in Miami/Metro Dade County, Florida; Monroe County/Rochester in New York; and Baltimore City in Maryland.

In Miami, for example, teams composed of a member of the police department and a social worker are being formed and trained. When the team discovers an episode of sexual exploitation of a juvenile, the police member of the team goes after the pimp or the adult purchasing the services of the juvenile, while the social worker is available to help the child. Funding for this demonstration project will be continued by the Miami/Dade County government. Similar projects were established at the other sites. The program has a large training component for public workers and a community education program. After the project ends at the end of this year, NACO will develop models and training materials for all member counties and affiliates.

These demonstration projects show that we are constantly seeking to improve our approaches to the problem of sexual exploitation of youth. However, I want to emphasize that staff members of all our shelters are also aware of the problem, and that they have developed over the years many of the central skills and services required to help these troubled youth.

I would like to conclude my testimony by telling you the story of Sarah, a 14 year old girl engaged in prostitution who was first contacted on the street of one of our larger cities by a shelter outreach team.

Sarah had started running away after having been sexually abused at the age of 10 by her stepfather. By the age of 14, she had been detained 15 times by the juvenile justice authorities of her city. She was no longer living with her mother and stepfather, but with her pimp, who abused her regularly. She had a number of sexually transmitted diseases and used drugs moderately and alcohol heavily.

The first conversation with our outreach workers on the street was inconclusive, but after a few weeks she started to come to them for medical treatment. After several more weeks she agreed to come to the shelter for two weeks, to get away from her pimp.

Once out from under the control of her pimp, she stopped using drugs and alcohol. At the shelter she started psychological counseling, to work out all the trauma of abuse by her stepfather and pimp.

From the shelter, she went into foster care with a single mother who provided a safe home atmosphere. While in foster care, she picked up her schooling, which she had abandoned when she entered prostitution.

Sarah is now 17 and 1/2 years old. She is still with her foster mother, though she is thinking about a more independent living arrangement. She is continuing her psychological counseling. She seems to be free from her earlier drug and alcohol addiction. She has completed her GED and plans to enter junior college to prepare a certificate in clerical skills.

This concludes my formal testimony. I will be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Senator **Hawkins**. Thank you for the excellent role you have played in these success stories. I have enjoyed working with you.

I am very involved in missing children, as you know, and from the beginning, I have asserted that children who are runaways or homeless should be included in our definition of missing children because these children need and deserve our help. I hear from some sectors that these children are not in danger, that they left home voluntarily—such as Sarah, who you have just mentioned—and that they will go back home.

Do you have any numbers on how many children do not leave home voluntarily?

Ms. **Hardy**. When we look at what we call throwaways, the ones who come to us—we have about 6,000 kids; about 9 percent of our children are estimated to be throwaways—- and though I do not have a direct correlation in front of me, I would venture to guess that many of those children, because they have been thrown away, are not always the ones who return home.

But as I testified, we have a pretty good success rate. Of the ones who come to the center, of those 6,000 who say they are thrown away, about 4,000 do go home.

Senator **Hawkins**. Are runaway children more likely to return home after they have received services and counseling at a runaway or youth center?

Ms. **Hardy**. Not all children who are classified as runaways in this country come through the shelter system. But I think any child is more likely to return to a safe environment if they have some extra support and some excellent counseling. In some cases, that is not the family, but in over half of our cases, it is the family, and the rest of them, we at least can place them in foster care or some other guardian or relative situation. So I think it is that support mechanism, whether it comes from us or whether it comes from our shelter system, or whether it comes from another system throughout the country.

Senator **Hawkins**. Do you have any estimate of the number of children who are never heard from again once they leave home?

Ms. **Hardy**. Do you mean in terms of the numbers that have been used by the Missing Children's Bureau, in that area?

Senator **Hawkins**. No; in your area.

Ms. **Hardy**. I do not have that, no. I think the ones that we all generally use are approximately 5,000 kids, nationwide.

Senator **Hawkins**. That are never heard from again.

Ms. **Hardy**. Yes, nationwide.

Senator **Hawkins**. What you are telling me, then, is that all children should not be returned to their homes; there are some homes that are not safe environments for the children, and that is why they run away in the first place.

Ms. **Hardy**. I think that is true in some cases. But they are often able to be returned to relatives or friends, maybe not the parents, to go into the foster care system and then, hopefully we can move into another subject, that we can get some of these kids adopted, as well.

But there are relatives, friends, or other support systems, and some of them do not go home. We show that 40 percent of our children are not placed back with their parents; 54 percent go back to families, the parents.

Senator **Hawkins**. Do the parents of runaway children also receive services under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act?

Ms. **Hardy**. Certainly, we encourage them strongly to participate in the counseling that that child gets at the runaway shelter. And as we said, many of the children do not run far, and the shelters are often used for counseling of them, and they certainly work very closely with the parents. In fact, having been in a Florida situation over on the West Coast of Florida in a shelter recently, two of the girls that I talked to, one of them, the parents were involved, and the other one, the counselors were trying to get the parents involved, and that was difficult. So there is both kinds.

Senator **Hawkins**. Can you explain the networking grants that you have been talking about and why they are needed?

Ms. **Hardy**. The Runaway and Homeless Youth Bureau put together the networking grants this year, where we would have an opportunity to have the shelters work with some small dollars, work together across either State lines, or within State lines, or in the Federal—regional lines. And we feel that they will be able to share a lot of their technical assistance with each other. There are some things in the Southeast, for example, that Georgia does, that perhaps Florida should be doing, and these kinds of interactions, we think are very positive.

Senator **Hawkins**. Is the Federal Government the only source of funding for these shelters?

Ms. **Hardy**. No. What we have found through Inspector General's reports and our other data is that our contribution to the cost of running the shelter is about 25 percent. So they are supported by their local, whether it is public or private sector, dollars that come into the shelters.

Senator **Hawkins**. Does the private sector do a lot in this area?

Ms. **Hardy**. I think the private sector, thanks to much of the comments that you have been making publicly, is doing a lot more, and I think there are some things we could get them to do more. But they have really been supportive. The Trailways piece; in Colorado, they are doing an Amnesty Day, through the Mountain Bell Pioneers, and using all those volunteers to take the phone calls for kids, just before Thanksgiving, to say, "Halt. Everybody can go home, and let us try and patch this all up, and we will have one day of amnesty." That is all being done by the private sector. I would like to see that go nationwide.

There are a lot of good examples around the country.

Senator **Hawkins**. Well, thank you so much, Dorcas. You have been of great assistance to us in trying to solve this problem, which is probably centuries old, but quite disturbing in a civilized society.

Ms. **Hardy**. Absolutely.

Thank you, Senator.

Senator **Hawkins**. Our next witness will be Cheryl McCall, a reporter for Life Magazine. Welcome, Cheryl.

STATEMENT OF CHERYL McCALL, NEW YORK, NY, REPORTER FOR LIFE MAGAZINE, AND PRODUCER OF "STREETWISE"

Ms. McCALL. Good morning, Senator. Thank you for having me here.

I thought it would be most effective if I could begin by showing you just some excerpts from "Streetwise", the documentary about the kids, which developed from the Life Magazine article that we did in 1983. Then, after that, I would like to give you my remarks.

Senator HAWKINS. Thank you. I believe the title of your story in 1983 was "Streets of the Lost"?

Ms. McCALL. Correct.

Senator HAWKINS. And that formed the basis for this compelling story.

Ms. McCALL. Yes, this film was developed directly from it.

Senator HAWKINS. Thank you.

[Videotape shown.]

Senator HAWKINS. Thank you very much.

Senator Dodd has just joined us. Senator Dodd, do you have a statement?

Senator DODD. No, Madam Chairman.

Senator HAWKINS. Cheryl, please continue.

Ms. McCALL. Thank you, Senator Hawkins.

Any child who runs away must depend upon the kindness of strangers. Most often, these strangers are pimps recruiting fresh, young faces; drug dealers searching for new customers, even if they are 12 years old; pornographers interested in child bodies; and droves of chicken hawks and tricks who are sexually excited by children. Sometimes, these strangers are killers. In Seattle, 32 of these young runaway girls have been hacked to pieces by a serial murderer called the Green River Killer. He is still at large today. Last week when I wrote this, I said "29," Senator; it is now 32 who have been killed.

Rarely do runaways meet someone who does not pose a threat or want to exploit them. These children, as young as 11 and 12, are prime targets for the least cunning exploiter. They are desperate, usually alone and frightened, naive, and in constant danger. Like you and me, they need food and shelter, but have no means of obtaining either. By the time they hit the streets of America, they have been so damaged by the physical and sexual abuse and neglect in their homes that they believe they are worthless. Their self-respect is so low that they think performing oral sex on an aging businessman for $40 is all they deserve in life. They think that suffering from multiple venereal diseases—[pause]—this still upsets me—they think that suffering from multiple venereal diseases before they even reach puberty is normal.

And, like DeWayne, in "Streetwise", many commit or attempt suicide.

A 1983 study by the New York Psychiatric Institute found that over 33 percent of runaway girls and 19 percent of the boys had attempted suicide. That is more than half, 52 percent, of the 1 million who run away each year. Studies tell us that a teenager will commit suicide every 90 minutes in the United States.

These children need help. Few of them receive it from their families or this society. At a recent conference on Youth In Crisis, Dr. Lee Salk, the noted child psychiatrist and pediatrician, gave us the four ingredients he has found necessary for the psychological survival of our children.

I thought about the children in "Streetwise" as I listened, and I knew he was right. Briefly, to paraphrase Dr. Salk, a child needs to feel important in this world to have self-esteem, to develop self-respect. A child needs to feel significant in the life of at least one other person. A child needs to feel accepted regardless of strengths and weaknesses, to be accepted for his own individuality. Finally, a child needs to feel he has some control over his life, that he is not helpless and subject to the whims of adults.

What runaway or homeless child in America feels these things? A teenage prostitute might feel significant in the life of her pimp, but that quickly disappears the first time he beats her for holding back a few dollars. Her earnings are her only significance to him. What child who has been kicked out and thrown away by his parents feels accepted and in control of his life? What child stripped of his or her clothes, posing nude for $10 a photo, as they do in Seattle, feels self-respect?

As a journalist, I have visited and reported on Calcutta, Bangladesh, Haiti, South America, and most recently, Ethiopia. I have had to bear witness to terrible human suffering, poverty, and despair. When I researched my story on runaways for LIFE in 1983, these children strongly reminded me of the "pavement dwellers" of Calcutta. They were hungry, homeless, begging and selling their bodies to survive.

Here in the United States, supposedly the richest, most powerful, and most compassionate Nation on Earth, our children were reduced to this. Every child prostitute, both boys and girls, that I have met started out as a runaway. Not one of them willingly chooses this degredation as a lark or an adventure. The simple fact is that they have nothing but themselves to sell.

Before you pass judgment on these kids and before you vote on expenditures for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, I suggest you and your colleagues from the Appropriations Committee spend 1 week on the streets. Go like 1 million American kids do—without credit cards or money, without a change of clothes, without a roof over your head or a door to lock to keep you in safety. Stand in the middle of America's skid rows and fend for yourselves among the pimps, thieves, muggers, drug dealers, rapists, pornographers, and tricks ready to pounce on you at the first sign of vulnerability. Be subjected to the terrifying ritual of "choose or lose", in which the pimps give you a choice of picking one of them as your master, or being beaten or killed if you refuse. Or try to withstand a "charge" in which a gang of them attack like the cavalry, strip you of your clothes and any money you have earned for being an "outlaw," which is begging or turning tricks without the so-called protection of a pimp.

I have witnessed these things, and they are barbaric. Try to maintain your dignity—and your sanity—in these conditions. Then imagine your own sons, daughters, grandchildren, or any loved one in those circumstances.

While you are out there on the streets, try to find any one of the precious few resources available to children under 18 who have no high school diploma, no skills and no address. Try to find a job, a free place to sleep, or a free meal if you are under 18.

In Seattle, there are 1,000 homeless youngsters on the street, and only 8 beds available each night in the shelter. By comparison, there are 900 beds available each night to transients over 18 in that city. The winos are treated a lot better than the kids.

In New York, there are 20,000 homeless kids and less than 300 beds at any given time. This kind of disparity exists in every urban area in the United States which hosts a runaway population.

While you are out there on the streets, try explaining the national deficit and belt-tightening measures to the kid eating out of the garbage dumpster and to the 13-year-old with VD and a black eye who has to gross $200 before her pimp will let her rest.

As Shadow said to me: "The Government thinks if it makes it hard enough on the streets, we will go home—but there is no place to go."

You might well think that this is a problem for families to solve. But you cannot legislate that parents love their children. You cannot legislate that violence, alcoholism, sexual abuse, and divorce be eradicated from their homes. And believe me, you cannot keep kids from running away from intolerable homes.

But you can legislate help for them once they hit the streets. We need enough programs and enough well-trained caring outreach workers to intervene quickly before these children become trapped in the criminal subculture. A few studies report that one in three runaways becomes a prostitute within 48 hours of leaving home. I witnessed that myself on the streets of Seattle in the case of Shellie. One day she was a 13-year-old, straight-A student with a paper route, and within a few days, she was turning tricks under duress from Patti and Munchkin, her so-called benefactors on Pike Street. You saw that excerpt in the film.

This is a country which spends billions on everything from Star Wars to filling potholes, but allocates only $23.25 million a year to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. This country spends $60 million on one MX missile and only $23.25 per year on a runaway child. This is also a country which spends $7,000 on a "Mr. Coffee" machine, but cannot give a meal to a homeless kid. Our priorities are sadly skewed, and we are already bearing the price as a society.

This is clearly a case where an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. If we do not salvage them quickly, they become criminals themselves—alcoholics, drug addicts, mental health cases, prostitutes, and eventually, welfare recipients.

I have personally done stories on five of them, ages 14 to 17, who became killers. Two of them were girls who stabbed an elderly woman 28 times for all of $10. In every case, their home lives were horrific and running away their only option.

We continue to ignore this problem at our own peril. It is not exaggerated, and it is not mythical. If anything, I have understated the grim reality of it and spared you many of the sordid details. If you can spare 92 minutes to watch the complete version of "Streetwise" this afternoon, you are welcome; I am leaving it here for the committee.

I would like to close with the thought that the situation is not hopeless. With more funding and better services, these children can be salvaged. If we as a society put the effort into our children that we expend on the space program, or spend as much on them as we do on defense, it would clearly make a difference. I am not so foolish as to believe this administration would match the $40 million an hour it budgets for defense on mere children, with no political clout and no lobbyists; but I am hopeful that perhaps the United States could forego building just one MX missile and invest that $60 million in these children. In terms of simple cost effectiveness, it seems like commonsense to me.

We have done what we can by making this film to increase public awareness and encourage more effective solutions to the problem.

It is now up to you, the Senate and the House, and within your power, to make a difference in the lives of kids like Tiny, Shellie, Rat, and DeWayne.

Thank you.

Senator HAWKINS. Thank you so much, Cheryl. Your testimony is very moving. Your research and your results are equally compelling for this Nation to act. And as you stated, children do not vote, they do not have lobbyists, and they do not have a PAC. So we need more people like you to raise our awareness level to the crises that our children are facing on the streets.

I was amazed at the families' responses in your movie to the fact that their children were on the street. One mother could not understand why her teenage daughter did not respect the man who had sexually abused her as a child, and the other mother stated this was just a phase her daughter was going through.

I think there is a big difference between accepting the child and accepting prostitution.

Runaways, in my experience, come from all walks of life, and this crosses all socio-economic levels. They come from intact families as well as broken homes. In your experience, is there a common denominator or a warning sign that would delineate a child who is at risk of becoming a runaway?

Ms. MCCALL. Well, it starts in the home. I have never met a child yet, as a runaway, who came from a home that was intact, Senator Hawkins. Divorce and multiple divorces, illegitimacy, and so forth were present in all the kids that I have met. And there must be hundreds and hundreds, if not thousands, by now.

Sexual abuse is a big part of it—88 percent of the kids on the street were sexually abused, and many of them also physically abused. One of the girls in the film, Patti, has deep scars all over her back from a chain that was used to beat her. Tiny, the main girl in the film, was sexually abused from the age of 7 on, by various men passing through her mother's life.

Some of these children were used at an early age by alcoholic parents to pay the rent. They were sent down to the apartment manager and forced to perform sexual acts in exchange for the rent for another month of $150.

I could tell you story after story of what happens. Children are at risk if the parents do not provide a good home for them, and if the parents do not love them. As I said before, you cannot legislate that people love their children. And you know, the runaway hotlines that want to reunite children with these families is not necessarily the answer it all, because these families: First, are nonexistent, as in DeWayne's case, where his father is in jail and his mother is in San Diego somewhere; and second, in Shadow's case, where he was kicked out, and so on and so forth, with all these kids. There are not any families there. The families have disintegrated.

Senator HAWKINS. So you agree with my belief that all children should not be returned to their homes.

Ms. McCALL. That is right. Sometimes, the home is not the place to return them. Give them a better chance at life. If you return them to those homes, they are only going to run away again. Most of the kids in the film have been in a number of group homes and foster homes already, had run away and been through the system, were system kids, where no one was having an impact on them.

Senator HAWKINS. I was amazed at their lack of knowledge about sex and reproduction.

Ms. McCALL. They are still kids—even though they perform these incredible acts upon these jerks who pick them up, these child molesters who are preying on them, they know nothing about sex because their parents do not tell them anything about sex, and so they end up with all these diseases before they even reach puberty. It is disgusting. And all these little boys have all sorts of diseases.

Senator HAWKINS. Is that lack of knowledge common among child prostitutes?

Ms. McCALL. Very common, very common. They find out after they have had a venereal disease a few times, they start figuring it out. But their pimps will not let them use the contraceptives and let them use the prophylactics, because it cuts down on business, because the child molesters who pick them up do not want to use the prophylactics; so they end up getting these diseases again and again and again.

Senator HAWKINS. Where do they go for assistance?

Ms. McCALL. Well, in Seattle, they have a free clinic that is run by the University of Washington. It is called the Adolescent Clinic. That is a free clinic, no questions asked, for street kids, and they can go in there. We have very few of those around the country. I just had one end up in New York. One of the street kids came to New York. She had gonorrhea, and I spent a whole day trying to find a place for her to go, somehow to get treatment, because she was underage and so forth, and not a resident. She had to be a resident. There are all these rules of bureaucracy that do not fit runaways, because they do not have an address, they are not residents. So they cannot even register in school. A kid like DeWayne, who wanted to go to school, could not register in school because he did not have an address, and you have to be relegated to a district, you know.

Those are the kinds of frustrations I am constantly coming up against.

Senator HAWKINS. I am working with a group called Theater-4; are you familiar with them?

Ms. McCALL. No.

Senator HAWKINS. They produced an award-winning program called "Hugs and Kisses," and they are now working on a play called "Runners," which is aimed at children who are potential runaways. It attempts to communicate to them that there are a lot of problems on the street, that running away may not be the solution to the problem, and that there are other options available.

I am wondering if the success of the program, "Streetwise," which you were so actively involved in, combined with a program like "Runners," will be able to communicate to children that like on the street as a runaway is not a glamorous adventure.

Ms. McCALL. Well, if there is another program, I think that is great. I have gotten a lot of letters from kids, telling me they will not run away now, after they have seen this film. This film has become like a cult film among teenagers. They go to see it again and again, and take friends to see it.

Senator HAWKINS. I first heard of it from a teenager, by the way.

Ms. McCALL. Yes; I do not know exactly why; I think it is because they like to see real kids. But they do write me letters, saying they never knew how tough it was on the street. So that might be something.

But you know, Senator, I should also mention that I think there are some things that we could do—I do not know if it is within the purview of this committee, but this concerns the family—at some of these conferences that I go to on youth in crisis around the country, I do find out certain things that are working, and one of those is Parents Anonymous and Parents United. If you are going to start dealing with the problems that are in the families and keeping the families intact, then you have got to help groups like that, which have very little funding and support, trying to struggle along as self-help groups, and work a little bit with some social agencies in their cities. But if you had more work in Parents Anonymous and Parents United, which deals with the sexual abuse in the families, you would go a lot farther toward treating this problem at its source than trying to get them after they end up on the street—although I am absolutely saying that you need to get them while they are on the street, because we already have millions out there on the street. Do not ignore those. But I do not know if Congress or the Senate has ever looked at this, or if there has ever been a bill about Parents United and Parents Anonymous doing something to help these kids—because it helps the families; it stops the abuse at home, and it stops the alcoholism and sexual abuse and so forth.

Senator HAWKINS. I am told they are funded through the Child Abuse and Sexual Treatment Act, but as usual, they do not have the amount of money they should.

Daily I am fascinated and pleased with the number of private partners that come forward to help us with missing children, but as that list continues to grow and becomes more and more successful, my concern is where should we place the children that should not be returned to their homes. And I believe you put your finger on that early, with the research that you did.

I look forward to working with you on a solution to the next step.

Senator Dodd.

Senator **Dodd**. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

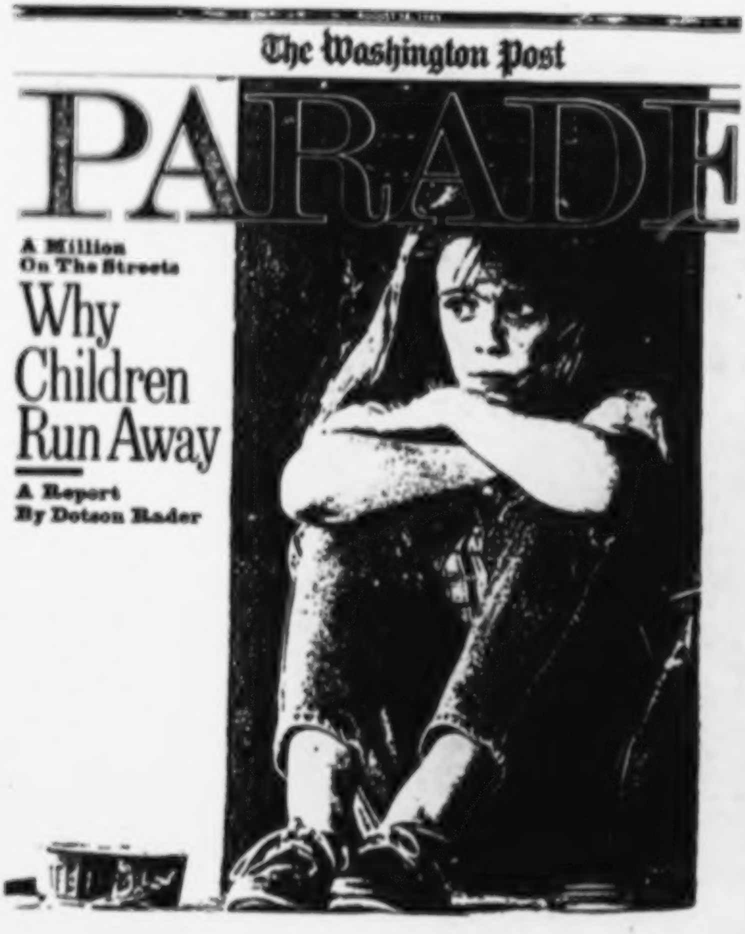
And thank you, Ms. McCall, very much for this film. Did you say you will leave it here so we get a chance to view it?

Ms. **McCall**. Yes; I will leave it here for this afternoon.

Senator **Dodd**. I appreciate that.

I will just ask a couple of questions, if I may. One is, Dotson Rader writes for Parade Magazine, and did an article in August, I guess, of this year. He quoted a young runaway and thus entitled his article: "I Want to Die So I Won't Hurt No More." Rader says in his article that the overwhelming majority of the children who run away are from middle- and upper-class families.

[The article referred to follows:]



The Washington Post

PARADE

A Million
On The Streets

Why Children Run Away

A Report
By Dotson Rader

Our runaways are overwhelmingly from middle and upper class families

'I Want To Die So I Won't Hurt No More'

Across America, runaways make their homes in bus stations, abandoned buildings, motels and cemeteries.

DESPITE SOME PROGRESS OVER THE LAST few years, runaway children remain one of America's most devastating problems. More than one million runaway children, with a median age of 15, are on the streets in this country, according to the federal government. Most are from middle and upper class families. About 70 percent are white, 20 percent are black and the rest are from other races. "Over a third run because of incest and because of physical abuse," says June Bucy, executive director of the National Network of Runaway and Youth Services. "A small proportion are kids who leave because of school troubles or drugs or other problems. The rest are throwaways—kids kicked out of home." Most urban runaways turn to prostitution after about six weeks, according to Mrs. Bucy. As many as 5000 young people disappear annually in the United States. "Some of them are murdered," she says. "As a group, runaway children have a high mortality rate. They suffer from malnutrition, venereal disease, a high incidence of suicide, and they are frequently sexually exploited."

A good deal has been done on behalf of runaway children in recent years. For example, the number of shelters across the country has risen from 140 in 1974 to about 325. Federal aid for runaways—budgeted under the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act of 1974, which was set up to assist groups wanting to establish shelters and counseling services—provides partial support for 260 such shelters. Its budget has increased from $8 million in 1974 to $23.3 million this year.

Last spring, PARADE sent me around the country to interview runaway children. Here is what I found.

BY DOTSON RADER

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I SPENT FIVE DAYS IN SAN FRANCISCO interviewing scores of runaways. They seemed to be everywhere, most of them surviving by prostitution or petty theft or drug-dealing. It is hard for them to get work because they have no fixed address, no phone, no legal papers. Officially, they are nonpersons. You find them south of Market, near the bus station. You see young boys filling the sidewalks on Polk Street. The girls work the Tenderloin from Post to Market. You see small children hanging around public phones on the chance a stranger will call, wanting one of them for the night. Or you find them sleeping in the dry fountain in UN Plaza or in "squats," abandoned buildings. Many are emotionally arrested—teens who act like 5-year-olds. But they are resilient. They try to help each other survive. They respond immediately to the slightest adult regard. If you are kind, sooner or later they'll ask if you'll give them a home. And they feel the rejection when it comes.

My last night in San Francisco, around 11, I talked to a small girl sitting on the hood of a car parked on Larkin. She said she was waiting for her boyfriend.

Her name was Anabel, she said, and she was 15, from Washington State. "My boyfriend is 18," she said proudly. "Danny. Isn't that a cute name, like Danny Osmond? He's 6-feet-1 and has a blond Mohawk and blue eyes."

She had short blond hair. The left side was dyed purple. She wore tight jeans, a beige turtleneck and red boots, and she held a small stuffed doll. Large chandelier earrings dangled from pierced ears. She looked like a child playacting in her mother's clothes.

"My parents got divorced when I was 10," she told me. "My father got a new girlfriend. She was his secretary. About three months ago, she moved in with us, and we didn't get along. So Dad said it was either her or me. We both couldn't stay, so he said I had to get out. It hurt me so much. I came down here, where I met Danny." Anabel spoke in a high, childish voice she had difficulty controlling. "Last month, I called my dad and asked if I could come home. He said no. I was too big to live with him now. So I have to stay here."

I asked why she didn't live with her mother.

"She says I belong with my dad," Anabel said. "She doesn't want me. So I live in an abandoned house on Oakdale Street with Danny and some little kids. I like Danny. If I get pregnant, he'll get me money for an abortion. Some guys will leave you. But I don't have sex with him. I never had sex. I want to wait until the time is right. I like to walk around a lot. I see pretty houses and pretend I live there. I want to go home. But I don't have one anymore."

From San Francisco, I went to Los Angeles and talked to runaways cruising Hollywood Boulevard and Santa Monica. I interviewed a girl who said she had fled Milwaukee when she was 12 because her father and uncle raped her. Now, at 14, she lived in an abandoned bathhouse on Venice Beach with several other kids and peddled drugs. She was four months pregnant and didn't know by whom. Under Santa Monica Pier, I found a 16-year-old boy asleep. Later he told me he had run away from Spokane because his grandparents, with whom he had lived, couldn't care for him anymore. In Los Angeles, he said, he was picked up by a man and a woman who ran a sado-masochistic sex club. Now he lived on the beach and was terrified of being inside buildings.

In San Diego, two boys, Doug and Carl, 15 and 16, and Doug's 14-year-old girlfriend, Joan, took me to the shopping center where they lived in empty packing crates on the roof. They said they came from well-to-do families nearby in La Jolla, had got into trouble over drugs and run away together.

In New Orleans, I interviewed runaways on Bourbon Street and on Canal. They lived one day at a time.

'I see pretty houses and pretend I live there. I want to go home.'

I went on to Alabama for five days, going each day to truck stops, woods, cemeteries and shopping malls to talk with kids. At one mall, I met Rachel, 15, with a round face, long brown hair and a Kewpie-doll mouth. With her was Dane, just turned 16. He was slightly built and very shy. Both of them seemed ill at ease.

I took them to McDonald's, where Dane told me that they hadn't eaten in two days. They ate a lot. Afterward, we talked.

"My mother died when I was 6," Rachel said. "I been in foster homes, 11 different ones since. Then they put me in a church home for girls, and they was real mean. So I ran away with my girlfriend. We was locked in our rooms at night. The windows locked. It was so low. You couldn't get water or nothin'. If you was bad, they locked you in 'isolation'—sort of a closet, all dark. They kept you there all day. They kept preaching at you about Jesus, but I don't think Jesus would treat little kids that bad.

"We ran and hid in the woods and then at night went to the highway and hitchhiked here. Melody, my girlfriend, went on to Atlanta, where she's got friends. And I met Dane—so here I am!" Rachel smiled and put her arm in his.

Dane didn't want to talk. I told him that if he changed his mind, he should call me at my motel.

When I returned to the motel at dusk the next day, I found him sitting on the curb. I invited him inside.

He found it hard to talk at first. We discussed TV shows and rock and other things until he relaxed. As with many runaway children, when he thought he had finally met an adult who would listen, it was like a dam had broken and his life began pouring out.

He was from the Midwest, he said, and his father was a steelworker. When Dane was 11, the family broke up.

"We nearly starved to death," he said, his voice ragged. "We couldn't get nothing to eat. No electricity. We used to eat out of garbage cans behind the deli and the bakery." His clouded blue eyes avoided mine, as if he were ashamed. "My dad was too proud to get welfare, and his unemployment ran out. It was scary. But I was too young to know what it was really about. It lasted about two months. And then my dad left and come here.

"My dad beat me all my life. He used to beat me with 2-by-4s, with lamps. You know those [illegible] racetracks? With those. With belts, electrical [illegible] wire, with [illegible], anything he could lay his hands on. Sometimes he made me strip all the way down. He said he never wanted me. That I wasn't his boy. That I ate his food and slept in his bed, and I didn't belong. He said he'd kill me one of these days."

Dane stopped talking and asked for some water. I got him a glass and asked him to tell me about his mother.

He thought awhile and then said, "About two years back, my mother started beating on me. I don't know why. I wasn't rotten. I used to have blisters on my [illegible] and bruises all over and cuts on my back. Some bleed."

"My dad got remarried, and I was living with him, and he started beating on me again," Dane continued. "I guess that just happens to some kids. I went to Texas and hung around for two or three months, and then I got homesick for my ma and come back. My mother was married again. My stepdad got drunk and beat her real bad. The police didn't even come."

Dane went on to tell me how his mother and stepfather had left him with relatives, who soon afterward kicked him out. "I slept in an old garage and later in unlocked cars at night," he said. "I just stole junk food. Then it started getting worse, and it was hard

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keeping warm by myself. I called my dad, and he said he didn't want me. I hitchhiked to Chicago to see if I could get work. I got arrested for stealing a postcard to send to my dad. Finally he sent me bus fare home. He said I had to work the money off, and he started beating me again."

Then, his jaw muscles working, he said, "Adults? I don't want to be one. I want to be a teenager all my life."

"I tried suicide three or four times," Dane said a little later. "I slashed my arms four months back with a razor at my grandmother's house. She wrapped my arms up and poured alcohol on them and told me to set in bed. We couldn't afford no hospital."

He held his arms out. There were more than 20 deep, bright-red slashes, running from his wrists to his elbows. "Then I tried to hang myself," he said. "It didn't work. I can't even do that right."

I asked if he thought anyone had ever wanted him, and he said he thought maybe they did when he was a baby. "I'm unwanted because of all the abuse I've been through," he said. "I want to die so I won't hurt no more."

Later, I took him back to the mall to meet Rachel.

Miss Brown's is an all-night coffee shop on San Francisco's Polk Street. In the early morning hours, runaways sit slumped in the booths, nursing cups of coffee until dawn. One morning about 3 a.m., I met Nicky at Miss Brown's. I noticed him sitting in a back booth by himself, staring out the window at the traffic. I asked if I could interview him. He agreed, and I slid in next to him.

He was tall, with a thin face and long, nervous hands. His voice was somewhat high and unsteady. He was 16.

He told me he was originally from Portland, Ore., although he had grown up in Tacoma. His parents were divorced, and his stepmother had thrown him out when he was 14.

"I didn't know what to do," he said. "I was just a kid. Finally, another kid told me about Camp—that's an area in Portland where all the boys and girls sell themselves. So I did, and I lived in a dirty hotel. Then I got beat up by pimps a couple times, and I came here to San Francisco and got involved down here. I've been here a year or two, I guess. I live in hotel rooms. Mostly the Leland, the TraveLodge, the Civic Motor, the Red Coach, the Abbey. I haven't been beaten up here. I've had harassment from cops about curfew. That's about it. I stay at the Abbey now in a room with other kids younger than me."

I asked Nicky what it was like to be a prostitute. He stared at me, looked down and said, "Actually, it makes me feel pretty bad. The fact of having to be out on the street and sell my body makes me feel dirty. Hookers to me are just like bums. Bums are drunks. We sell our bodies and turn into speed freaks. And they don't care about anyone, only getting that drug. I'm on crystal now."

"Do you ever shoot it?"

"Yeah," he said. "I don't know why. I didn't know what it was when I first did it. At the time, all the kids was doing it. It worries me because of my future. I can end up like some bad man. Or I can straighten up and go right and get a good paying job." He smiled at the hopelessness of it.

I asked about loneliness.

He thought a moment, then said, "Not when I'm with my best friend. His name is David. I don't really like to talk about him much, because people on Polk try to steal your friends. David lives in Concord, and when we met, we just winked it off. He's like an everyday boy, you know, like the type you'd see in high school instead of the type I see on the street, the speed freaks and hookers. He's an all-American boy, like everybody wants as a friend. He doesn't do drugs.

'When winter started, I called my dad, and he said he didn't want me'

Me? I was popping speedballs in grade school."

"I would like to live with him in his house with his father and everything," Nicky continued. "But I really want to get my act together and get away from the streets before I spend a lot of time with him, because he won't be my friend if he knows how I have to live. He doesn't know that I sell my body. David thinks I live like he does, in a nice house. I don't know if David would hate me if he found out, but I can't tell him because he might hate me."

I asked Nicky if he was ashamed of what he had to do to survive.

He looked at me and shrugged. "I wouldn't want to get David involved in it," he said. "I want to keep quiet about it, because I don't want him to get to Polk Street and get involved in prostitution and the drug world and have to live in dirty hotels and not go home anymore. David is very handsome. He wears really beautiful clothes, and he's very polite, you know. Everybody likes him. He never gets angry or shouts at me or anything bad. If I lived with him, he wouldn't let anything bad happen to me."

As he spoke, I began to sense that perhaps his best friend, David, was fictitious, that he had no best friend and that he invented someone to love him because nobody else did. David, the boy everybody liked, was the boy Nicky wanted to be but knew he never would be.

At present, six states directly allocate money for shelters for runaways, while several others finance private programs for child abuse or battered families, with some of that money going to help runaways. California has under consideration legislation that would provide $2 million for shelters for runaways.

The six states and the amounts they have budgeted for runaways are: Oklahoma, $7 million; Texas, $2.7 million; West Virginia, $2 million; Florida, $1.8 million; New York, $1.3 million; and Wisconsin, $366,000. Not all of this money goes directly to aid runaways. For example, West Virginia helps support 40 foster homes with its $2 million, but the residents of those homes are not necessarily runaways. Oklahoma supports 31 shelters, which aided 15,000 runaways in 1984.

In addition to federal and state assistance, a private agency, the National Network of Runaway and Youth Services, helps raise money to augment shelter budgets. It works through the National Fund for Runaway Children, which collects private funds and gives grants to shelters across the country. The fund also provides information for groups that want to set up shelters.

Supporters of aid to runaway children are urging the Congress to increase its appropriations for 1986. Hearings will be held next month.

Two telephone hotlines for runaways are in place, and the National Crime Information Center keeps a file on missing children. The Trailways Corporation provides a free ride home to any runaway who wants one. Since it began offering the bus rides in June of 1984, Trailways has transported more than 4500 runaways, according to Roger Rydell, a spokesman for the company. Most important, the American people are finally aware of and concerned about these children. ■

HOW TO HELP

For more information about runaways, contact the National Fund for Runaway Children, Dept. P, P.O. Box 8283, Washington, D.C. 20024. To reach the National Runaway Switchboard, call 1-800-621-4000. To reach the National Runaway Hotline, call 1-800-392-3352.

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Senator Dodd. Is that your experience as well?

Ms. McCall. No; I find they are across the board. They are not overwhelmingly middle and uppper class. I find them also from the working class.

But I do find overwhelmingly, even if they are middle and upper class, that there is divorce and alcoholism and abuse also in those families.

Senator Dodd. Regarding local police departments, there is a tremendous presumption made in favor of parental prerogatives in dealing with children. In some instances, that presumption is made for good reason. I do not know whether you would agree with this, but in my experience in the Congress in dealing with some of these issues, I have learned that even though some runaways may be very young children, they are making very rational, adult decisions to leave home. Running away may not be an irrational decision, but rather a very mature decision given the circumstances that some young people are living under.

Is that your judgment as well?

Ms. McCall. Yes; they could not plead temporary insanity. I mean, these are premeditated acts of running away. But in every case of a kid that I have come across who has stayed on the street, there was a reason. If they run away for a lark, they go home within a couple of days, because they see how tough it is out there. But if they run away for a good reason, or were kicked out—and some of these kids went home, and the home did not exist anymore; their parents had moved, gone. I mean, it is inconceivable to me that you would just leave your kid. But that did happen to DeWayne.

So they do make rational decisions to leave, and there is a reason.

Senator Dodd. Yes; they are fleeing intolerable conditions.

What is the reaction of police departments and courts with regard to that conclusion? Your conclusion is the same one I have had, about runaway children having made intelligent, rational decisions, given the circumstances they were living in. Does that presumption prevail, in your experience, with State agencies across the country as a general rule?

Ms. McCall. I do not think so. I think the whole system of juvenile justice and jurisprudence in general is set up around the very old idea of the normal American family. And that does not exist anymore. It certainly does not exist anymore in all of the stories that I have done on these kids. But they think that children should be returned to their homes. If it is intolerable, and the social service agencies do get involved, then they will put them in foster homes. The problem with the foster homes is that there are not very many good ones around. In fact, they have a big lack of foster homes right now in the Washington area. In Seattle, they need 10,000 foster homes. But so many people have to work, both partners in a marriage or whatever have to work, so that they cannot take foster children in.

So that the people you are getting as foster parents are not often the best qualified and are the ones who only do it for the money. In the case of Kim, one of the girls in this film, she was put in a foster home where the father was a convicted sex offender, and his teenage daughter was still in the home, whom he had molested many times, and she had tried to commit suicide three times. And yet he was considered a foster father, qualified.

The system breaks down, or people do not investigate, or they will just take anybody because they are so desperate to get a foster home.

Senator DODD. I do not anticipate this occurs very often, but what percentage of these children at the initial stage of running away go and seek out any public authority figures like the police to help them deal with their situations? Does that occur with any frequency at all?

Ms. MCCALL. I never saw it very much. I think they fear them, or they fear being caught and being sent back home, being sent back to an intolerable situation. They always seem to think the police are their enemy, in Seattle.

Senator DODD. I did not hear your complete answer to the chairman's question about how often the film is being shown—was that your question?

Senator HAWKINS. She is leaving it here today.

Senator DODD. Oh, I know that, but I meant——

Ms. MCCALL. It was nominated for an Academy Award. It is in theaters all over the country, and it makes its way around. It opened last October, and it is still playing.

Senator DODD. Well, what about in schools?

Ms. MCCALL. I would love to see it in the schools. I would love to see it in social work programs. I use it whenever I can, in any kind of educational way, but I do not own the film. It was made, but I made no money on it. I had to sell the rights for it to complete it so that you could even see what you saw. So it is not up to me.

Senator DODD. Who owns it?

Ms. MCCALL. Angelica Films, which is a small distribution company in New York—and believe me, I have never yet seen them let anybody use it for free.

Senator HAWKINS. Won't it soon be on videotape?

Ms. MCCALL. I hope so, and then people could buy a copy and have it.

Senator HAWKINS. Then we could buy it and distribute it through the schools.

Senator DODD. Not only schools, but I would think that shelters dealing with children who are already in that kind of situation might be able to use the film. It is a very profound film and could have an effect on children who have already run away. Obviously, I think that showing the film in public schools would be of some help as well. Maybe we might examine that possibility, Madam Chairman.

Senator HAWKINS. Yes.

Ms. MCCALL. Well, in Boston and New York this year, the public schools were taking their classes to see it as a field trip during the day, and it was pretty successful up there, was the feedback I got.

Senator DODD. I presume the reaction has been a positive one.

Ms. MCCALL. Oh, I think it has been, yes.

Senator DODD. The last question I have may have been answered in the film, but I will ask it of you anyway. It appeared in the film that some parents accept their child's acting as a prostitute or drug runner because the child is earning a fair amount of money. We will have a witness here shortly from my home State of Connecticut who will describe the plight of children who are not runaways as such, but are working as drug runners for either their parents or others. Is that common? There was an implication in the film, for example, that even the mother of this young girl was not terribly upset over the fact that she was engaged in prostitution.

Ms. McCall. Well, she just felt defeated. She is an alcoholic. When you see the whole film, you will see what a terrible alcoholic she is. She just feels she has no control over her life or her kid's life.

Senator Dodd. Well, is there any experience at all or any data that indicate that some of these children are still living in what we might at least peripherally call a family environment and are earning money for the family via illegal means. And I mean illegal behavior above and beyond the drug situation with which I am more familiar.

Ms. McCall. Yes; that girl, for instance, is in and out of her home, depending on—her mother moves from month to month, because she gets kicked out. That girl, by the way, is now 16 and 5 months pregnant, and has gonorrhea, and is going to have this child, and is going to be a welfare recipient, so there will be two of them on the rolls.

I did run into kids, by the way, who are drug runners for their parents in Seattle. They were selling grass, marijuana. And I know that is not uncommon.

Senator Dodd. Well, thank you very much for being with us, and thank you for bringing this excellent film.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator Hawkins. Just one closing question, Cheryl. I believe you said that street kids consider dealing in drugs one step up from prostitution.

Ms. McCall. That is right. That is the hierarchy, yes. Being a prostitute is the lowest. But if you are in business for yourself, dealing drugs, then you do not have to perform any acts; you just deal the drugs, and it is actually a step up in the social hierarchy.

Senator Hawkins. That is another tragic statement.

In your "Streets of the Lost" article, you detail the very sad and tragic life of a runaway named "Erin."

Ms. McCall. That is the girl you saw in the film, "Tiny."

Senator Hawkins. But you also note that her life was beginning to turn around since she met an outreach worker from the St. Dismas Youth Center. In your opinion, are these outreach centers effective?

Ms. McCall. Yes; but now, the Dismas Center is a very impoverished center run by a church group there. Last year, we showed "Streetwise"—Willie Nelson, who is the executive producer of this film with me, and I, went out there to do a benefit to raise the money to pay the rent for the Dismas Center so it could get through the winter, to pay the heat and the rent on the Dismas Center, because that center was reaching those kids, and it was in immediate peril within 3 days of closing down

So I have used the film like that all over the country, as benefits for the shelters, to raise money and also to bring attention.

But you know, it is just too little—you are talking about the private sector, but they do not have enough—and these are unpaid volunteers. But she did make quite a difference in Tiny's life. But she had been doing it for 10 years, and she finally burned out, the worker that I wrote about in the article in 1983. This past year, she finally just took a job and got married and started her own life. But she had made quite a difference. She saved her several times from terrible—-and I will not go into what she saved her from.

Senator HAWKINS. Well, I look forward to working with you on the solutions. Thank you very much for being with us today.

Ms. MCCALL. Thank you.

Senator HAWKINS. Our next panel is comprised of dedicated individuals who work with children like those in the documentary "Streetwise."

We welcome Bill Bentley, from Tallahassee, FL, executive director of the Florida Network of Youth and Family Services, accompanied by Tom Patania, executive director of the Youth Crisis Center in Jacksonville, FL; also, Susan Gehring, Ames, IA, coordinator of the Iowa Runaway Homeless and Missing Youth Prevention Education Center, and John Cottrell, Bridgeport, CT, associate director of youth services, Council of Churches.

Senator Dodd and Senator Grassley have a conflict, and apologize to their constituents that they are unable to hear their testimony.

Bill, welcome. We will ask you to go first.

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM H. BENTLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FLORIDA NETWORK OF YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES, TALLAHASSEE, FL, ACCOMPANIED BY TOM PATANIA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, YOUTH CRISIS CENTER, JACKSONVILLE, FL; SUSAN G. GEHRING, COORDINATOR, IOWA RUNAWAY, HOMELESS AND MISSING YOUTH PREVENTION EDUCATION CENTER, AMES, IA; AND JOHN COTTRELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, YOUTH SERVICES, COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, BRIDGEPORT, CT

Mr. BENTLEY. Good morning, Senator. Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to address your committee.

I am Bill Bentley, and I am executive director of the Florida Network of Youth and Family Services, which is in Florida. Our agency is comprised of 16 programs who serve primarily runaway and troubled youth in Florida.

In my testimony today, I would first like to briefly outline the approach that Florida is using to address the problems these children face, and I would also like to address the major issues with which we are currently grappling in Florida.

Each year in Florida, over 20,000 children leave home or are pushed out by their families. As response to this problem, our shelters were developed, and we are currently trying to provide the necessary services.

I will not talk about a lot of the horrors that occur in the streets, because I know my fellow panelists will do that, and Ms. McCall did a very fine job of outlining what the problems really are on the streets for these kids.

Last year, our shelters served 7,500 kids, roughly. That is about one-third of all the kids that we know are on the streets of Florida. What that tells us is that most of the kids who are on the streets are not being served by anybody, which, of course, is a very serious problem for us.

Our initial approach in Florida is to first try and do primary prevention—identify the problems of children and their families, and provide the services they need, to hopefully stop the runaway behavior.

Our second approach is to try and provide alternatives for dealing with these kids, in order to address the needs of the overburdened child welfare system and at the same time address the needs of the kids.

Our final approach is to try and divert kids who have run away who have been identified by the system from the formal system, so as to minimize their placement in secure, locked-up facilities.

Recognizing that runaway children and the services they need are not currently available, at least not to the extent that we would like, the Florida Legislature created a statewide task force on runaway and troubled youth in 1983. The sole purpose of that task force was to try and identify the problems of these kids and recommend solutions—solutions that would be long lasting.

To this end, they developed a plan which called for the implementation of services for kids and their families, services that went beyond residential, but also allowed for nonresidential services.

There are some who would suggest to you that runaway kids as a group need to be placed in shelters. While we think that that is very true for some kids, we also know that whenever possible, you need to try to provide services for children in their home settings.

One of the major problems in Florida right now has to do with the secure detention of runaway and troubled youth. The system believes that kids like those identified by Ms. McCall need to be taken off the streets for their own good. Our belief in Florida is that detention is not the proper setting for these types of children.

While removing these kids from detention is a major priority for our State, last year we looked up over 2,000 runaway and troubled youth in the State of Florida. We put them in secure facilities which for lack of a better term, we will call kiddy jails; there were bars on the windows, locks on the doors—the kids were treated like criminals.

I might add, by the way, that this figure represents a 46-percent increase over the number of kids we locked up in 1983.

While the Office of Juvenile Justice sanctions the use of valid court orders as a means of placing children who have committed no offense in secure settings, the Florida network does not condone such action. Detention is not a program, and as such, is not intended to provide anything more than custodial care.

Placing runaway children in secure detention appears to be the system's response to the frustration that they experience in trying to work with these children.

Experience suggests that this only exacerbates an already serious problem. While locking the child up may get him or her off the streets temporarily, it does nothing to address the real problem, the problem being the family is experiencing major dysfunction and is in need of care and services from the system.

I might also point out that locking children up in secure detention places the full burden for the problem on the child without addressing the needs of the family. Obviously, we do not want to see young children roaming the streets of Florida, without shelter or a safe place to be. When these children are on the streets, they run the risk of being exploited by adults who care not for their benefit. I might also point out that these kids also rip you off, they rip me off, in order to survive, as Ms. McCall mentioned. They do not have an income. They are too young to have a "regular job," so they do whatever it takes to get over, which means stealing, which means prostitution, which means selling drugs—whatever it takes to get over, these kids will do.

There are also many kids, of course, who we find dead in the streets, because they are out there with nobody to take care of them. We obviously need to have some type of resource for these kids to turn to.

One of the problems that we have not spoken about in this setting yet, and we do not talk about it very much in Florida, has to do with the lack of accessibility of our front-end services, our runaway shelters for our troubled kids by minority youth. Minority children as a group are not receiving services from our front-end shelters in Florida. And I would suggest to you that this problem also exists across the country.

Last year, our programs served approximately 15 percent of the population for minority kids, primarily black kids. The number may appear to be high, given that roughly 20 percent of our at-risk population is black. However, most of that percentage is accounted for by Dade County, whom I am sure you all are aware has a very large Hispanic and black community. We have shelters which serve less than 1 percent of their population which are minority kids. This, in my opinion, is a very serious problem.

Why does the problem exist, you might ask. I think there are three basic explanations. One is that the system has perpetuated several myths, the first being that black kids primarily do not run away from home. The second myth is that when black kids do run, that the community takes them into their arms and provides the needed care and support that these kids need, in the old tradition of the extended family. The third is that black families do not place the same type of demands on their kids, and therefore, the kids have no need to run.

I think that these myths have caused the system to be complacent and convinced that someone else is addressing the problem. I would suggest to you that someone else is not.

We found in the first 3 months of 1985 that of the 600 kids that were locked up in secure detention for status offense, primarily running away, 20 percent were minority kids. Obviously, these kids are running; obviously, the community is not taking care of their needs. I suggest to you that you walk down into any inner city area, and you will see kids hanging on the street. A lot of these kids are runaways; a lot of these kids are throwaways. A lot of these kids are not being helped by their communities. I think that we, the system, need to begin to address the needs of these children. I think, Senator, that your committee and your efforts have done a lot to help us provide more resources that we need for these children. I think, of course, that more is needed.

I would also point out that we are beginning to see a similar pattern with our Hispanic youth; that they do not run, that their community if they do run will take care of them. Whether or not this myth is true remains to be seen. We do not have enough data yet to really know what the extent of the problem is.

I would suggest, however, that we pay special attention to what is happening with these kids, lest. we lull ourselves into a sense of complacency about them, also.

The third and final issue of major concern in Florida is that of resources. Like many other States, Florida is experiencing a frustration which accompanies having insufficient resources to effectively serve and meet the needs of many of our children. This is especially true of runaway children.

The answer, in my opinion, is the need to expand the partnership between the private sector and business and industry. This is especially true as Federal dollars and State dollars become harder to find. We need to begin to ensure that communities have the adequate resources they need to address the needs of runaway and troubled children.

Our network strongly supports and is committed to developing services for runaway and homeless youth in our State. While we recognize and understand the frustrations experienced by judges and law enforcement and others in the child welfare system who work with these kids, we cannot endorse the use of secure detention for children who have done nothing more than run, in many cases, from very, very bad home situations.

One of our primary goals is to ensure that we are not punishing children because of the system's inability to meet their needs. We support striving to find solutions to the problems and not continuing to overreact to the symptoms.

I might close by quoting Thoreau. He said that "Many men lead lives of quiet desperation." Our runaway and our troubled youth are desperate and their lives are being wasted. I think we must began to provide the resources needed to make their lives more productive.

Thank you.

Senator Hawkins. Thank you, Bill.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bentley follows:]

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TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO

THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON

CHILDREN, FAMILY, DRUGS, AND ALCOHOLISM

UNITED STATES SENATE

ON BEHALF OF THE
FLORIDA NETWORK OF YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

BY

WILLIAM H. BENTLEY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
FLORIDA NETWORK OF YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES

October 1, 1985

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Madame Chair and members of the Subcommittee, I am Bill Bentley, Executive Director of the Florida Network of Youth and Family Services, a statewide association of programs providing both residential and non-residential services to children and their families. I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee, and I want to commend you, Senator Hawkins, for your leadership and strong support of the programs which serve runaway and homeless youths and their families.

In my testimony today, I first want to briefly outline the approach Florida is using to address the problems of runaway and homeless children and their families. Second, I will discuss several major issues with which Florida is currently grappling concerning runaway children.

Each year, over 20,000 Florida children leave home or are pushed out by their parents. As a response to this problem, Florida has a network of 14 programs serving runaway children and their families. Last year, the Florida shelters served approximately 7,500 children. The approach to runaway children and their families in Florida is threefold. First, we want to prevent the initial runaway episode (primary prevention) or "nip them in the bud" through early identification and intervention (secondary prevention). Second, we want to provide alternatives to the handling of runaway cases that satisfy the needs of

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an overburdened child welfare system and, at the same time, meet the needs of children and their families. Finally, we want to reduce the number of cases in which judicial intervention occurs (diversion) and, thereby, reduce the potential number of runaway youth who are subsequently placed in detention for violation of valid court orders.

Recognizing that runaway children and the services for them needed to be addressed, the Florida Legislature created the Statewide Task Force on Runaway and Troubled Youth in 1983. The Task Force recommended a system of "full service centers" to provide a continuum of services to runaway and troubled youths and their families. In addition, the Task Force stressed the need for prevention and nonjudicial intervention services to lessen the involvement of runaway and troubled youth in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems, especially involvement that might lead to a confinement in secure lockup.

The use of secure detention for runaways and other troubled youth is an important issue in Florida. The deinstitutionalization of status offenders (i.e., runaways, truants, and ungovernables) has been a priorty in Florida for over a decade, and Florida was among the first states to decriminalize status behaviors. However, during Fiscal Year 1984-85, 2,271 nonoffenders, the majority being runaway and homeless youths, were placed in secure detention. This figure represents a 46 percent increase over Fiscal Year 1983-84. Obviously, the problem is not getting any better. Although the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention sanctions the use of valid court orders as a means of placing children who have committed no crimes in secure settings, the Florida Network of Youth and Family Services cannot condone such action. Detention is not a program and is not intended to provide anything more then custodial care. Placing runaway and homeless youth in secure detention appears to be the system's response to the frustration of trying to serve these children and the failure to utilize adequately existing resources or to develop meaningful alternatives. Experience suggests that the use of secure detention serves only to exascerbate an already serious problem. Although locking up the child may get him or her off the streets temporarily, it is only a "stop gap" measure which addresses the symptom and not the problem. This action also places the full burden of the problem on the child, when all available research indicates that runaway and other status offense behavior is a reflection of serious family dysfunction. Obviously, we do not want our young children roaming the streets of Florida without supervision and no safe place to seek food and shelter. When these children are on the streets, they run the risk of falling victim to adults who wish only to exploit them. In some cases, in order to survive, runaway children engage in various types of criminal behavior. And yes, some have even been found dead. However, recent research conducted by the Inspector General's Office of Florida's Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services indicates that placement in detention does not necessarily deter status behaviors. A 24-month follow-up of a random sample of 110 status offenders placed in secure detention indicated that 70.5 percent of the youth had subsequent referrals to the Department of Health and Rehabilitati Services, as compared to 33.6 percent of those who had not been detained.

Another issue of importance in Florida concerns minority children in the population of runaway and troubled youths. There is an interesting, if not puzzling, phenomenon occurring in Florida which, I suspect, may also be prevelant in other states. This relates to the under-utilization of our "front end" shelter program services for runaway and homeless youths by minority children, especially black children. During 1984, only 15.2 percent of the children served by our state's runaway shelter programs were minority children. Conversely, 21 percent of the status offenders securely detained in the first quarter of calendar year 1985 were minority children, primarily black children. Moreover, a one day survey in May of this year of detention facilities operated by the state social services agency indicated that over 40 percent of all the children in secure detention on that day were nonwhite children. Minority youth represent only 25 percent of the at-risk population (10-17 year olds in Florida), yet a disproportionate number of them end up in what would be considered our most restrictive settings. These figures suggest that, for some reason, minority children, especially black children, are not accessing the services provided by runaway shelters, and, more frequently than not, are being placed in more restrictive settings. Why, you may ask, are these children not receiving needed services from programs serving runaway and homeless youth?

I think there are several explanations. First, the system has perpetuated several myths about runaway behavior among certain minority groups. One myth is that black children, in particular, do not run away. There are those who suggest that the family's expectations are not as high and, therefore, black parents don't place as many or the same type of demands on the child, thus the child is not likely to feel the need to run away. The third, and perhaps most prevelant myth, is the one that suggests that, if a black child does run away from home or is pushed out by his or her family, the community will take care of him in the tradition of the extended family. I would suggest to you that perpetuating these myths has caused us to be complacent and convinced that someone else is addressing the problem. Well, it's not happening. What is happening is that minority children's first contact with the "helping" system is when they've broken the law. Too late, I might add, to provide very meaningful preventative services. Noteworthy is the fact that a similar pattern is occurring with Hispanic youth in Florida. Again, we are beginning to hear some of the same myths to explain why Hispanic youths are not being served by our runaway programs in Florida. Whether or not there is any validity to this myth remains to be seen.

The third and final issue of major concern in Florida is that of resources. Florida, like many other states, is experiencing the frustration which accompanies having insufficient resources to implement effectively the service continuum necessary to meet the needs of many of its children. This is especially true of services for runaway children.

What is the answer for runaway and troubled youths? How can we prevent these children from being placed in secure detention? How do we begin to address the needs of runaway and homeless youths, regardless of their ethnicity or economic backgrounds?

We need to ensure that adequate resources are available within the communities to address the needs of runaway children and their families. Second, we need to ensure the capacity of programs serving runaway and homeless youth to do outreach and to provide in-home services, in addition to the residential services and other services currently provided. Also, we need to expand the partnership between private sector programs and business and industry. This partnership becomes more important as public funds to support the efforts of programs serving runaway and homeless youth become harder to find.

The Florida Network of Youth and Family Services strongly supports and is firmly committed to the implementation of a full service center continuum for runaway and other status behavior youth. This continuum of care would provide the service alternatives needed to minimize the placement of these youths in secure detention. While we recognize and understand the frustrations experienced by judges, law enforcement, and others in the child welfare system who work with runaways and other status offender youth, the endorsement of secure detention for these youths is not a position the Florida Network of Youth and Family Services can support. One of our primary goals is to ensure that we are not punishing children because of the system's inability to meet their needs. We support striving to find solutions to the problems and not overreacting to the symptoms.

Thank you.

Senator **Hawkins**. Tom, welcome.

Mr. **Patania**. Senator, it is good to see you again. I appreciate the opportunity to come and address you on the needs and the plights of runaway and homeless children.

As a formal introduction, I am Tom Patania. I am the executive director of Youth Crisis Center, which is a licensed runaway program in northeast Florida, located in Jacksonville. I am immediate past president of the Florida Network of Youth and Family Services.

Senator, obviously, you are aware of the horrors that befall the children who are on our streets because they ran away or were pushed out of their homes by their parents or their legal guardians. We all know those horrors that befall these children.

What we are talking about are children who have experienced personal or family problems and are looking for some kind of escape. Sometimes running away is an act of premeditation, but in our experience, running away is often an act of impulse. So, runaways quickly find themselves out of friends, out of resources, out of money, and out of luck Combine this with the fact that these are children who are in various states of crisis and who do not feel very good about themselves, and what you have are extremely vulnerable children at the mercy of skilled predatory people—the pimps, the pornographers, the pedophiles.

It is imperative that you realize that these predatory people are organizing themselves. In New York City, there is the North American Man/Boy Love Association, which is organized to promote tbe notion that children at any age should be allowed to have sex. Another such organization in California advertises the slogan, "Sex before eight, or it's too late." The FBI reveals that pedophiles have developed computer networks one of which lists children by sex, race, hair and eye color, and the type of sex act performed. If this is the grim reality of our day, which it appears to be, then these hearings are more critical than ever.

So far, I have been addressing the needs and plight of children, but I feel we do this issue an in justice if we ignore the family. When a child runs away, the entire family is traumatized. Not only are we talking about the fear that pervades the family during a runaway episode, but we need to be cognizant of the feelings of guilt, anger, frustration, and the underlying problems that led to the runaway episode, all of which must be addressed if we are really to help these children and their families.

In short, when we talk about runaway children, we really need to be talking about families.

The Florida Legislature recognized this fact in 1983, when it enacted the Florida Runaway Youth and Family Act, which established a continuum of services to be provided by community-based runaway programs to serve runaway children and their families. The act recognized runaway programs as the best vehicles for dealing with this target population because these are the programs which have been serving runaways and their families for the past 12 years.

In recent years, my program, the Youth Crisis Center in Jacksonville, FL, has been seeing children with more severe emotional problems involving drugs, alcohol, sexual abuse, and physical abuse. These are children coming from families with more complex problems, some of which render them totally dysfunctional. These problems require that the counseling staff of runaway programs be adequately trained. It also requires child care staff, that is, the night people, have specialized training in areas such as suicide prevention, aggression control techniques, and other advanced areas of child management.

At my program, we found it necessary to contract with a team of licensed marriage and family therapists to help our counselors with the more severe cases. We also found it necessary to conduct psychological testing and family psychosocial evaluations in order to help some of these children and their families.

In our weekly group therapy sessions, we help the children to communicate beyond their anger and to begin looking at better ways of dealing with their problems.

My point is this. Runaway programs are not merely maintenance programs. They are programs designed to be accessible on a 24-hour basis, with the capability of stabilizing children in crisis, assessing underlying problems, and providing a family systems approach toward reconciliation, when possible. The continuum of care through runaway programs as established by tbe Florida Legislature as a cost-effective and service-effective approach to dealing with these children and their families. It certainly is more cost-effective than building institutions and financing additional foster care beds.

The greater wisdom, though, is that supporting the services of runaway programs is more than just getting vulnerable children off the streets. It is the wisdom of supporting America's families. It is our hope—my hope and that of the Florida Network—that you will recognize this wisdom and fully support runaway programs with adequate funding for training, technical assistance, and programmatic development

Thank you, Senator.

Senator HAWKINS. Thank you very much, Tom.

Susan, we are going to hear from you next.

Ms. GEHRING. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I am pleased to see this issue coming out in front of our country. I think for too long we have denied the fact that the kids on the streets are our kids—they are not somebody else's kids; they are ours, and we have to own their problems.

First, a bit of background about Youth and Shelter Services and the Runaway, Homeless, and Missing Youth Prevention Education Center.

Youth and Shelter Services serves a largely rural area in central Iowa, an area many of us like to think of as carefree, troublefree, with happy families, and therefore, we have no runaways. We certainly don't have very many large urban areas in Iowa, so it is frequently thought that this is a problem that belongs on the coast, or in New York. Unfortunately, it is a serious problem in Iowa, also. We have children leaving daily from the farms. The farm crisis is affecting them as seriously as it is affecting their parents. And when these children end up on the streets, they are in serious trouble. They do not have any of the skills that perhaps a child who grew up in an urban area might have.

Youth and Shelter Services does serve these types of children, and the Runaway, Homeless, and Missing Youth Prevention Education Center which is one of five in the country supported by Federal funds, is a brand new program designed to provide prevention services, information to kids, parents, to school personnel, and to other people who might be able to intervene on an early basis when a runaway situation appears to be happening. We will also be working with parents of runaways as the program grows and helping them to understand the laws and what happens with their children, where the services are, where they can go, how they can get their child back from another State, and so forth.

We are making great strides in the State. We are also in serious trouble as far as finances, but we are starting, at least.

Unfortunately, the beginning efforts that we have undertaken to prevent runaways are not enough to prevent and remedy the dangers faced by those youth currently on the run, or those that, with even the best of prevention efforts, still see their only valid choice as to leave home.

These dangers are real and ever-present, and tragically, there is a serious lack of safe places for these youth to find refuge. Shelters are few, and frequently full.

Foster care and other immediate crisis type services are also in high demand and extremely short supply. Jail is an unacceptable and dangerous alternative, a place where many children try to kill themselves, and quite a few succeed.

The streets appear to be these children's only choice.

A youth does not typically run to a distant place the first few times. They go somewhere fairly safe—a refuge from the chaos of home. They may run to a neighbor or friend's house. They soon wear out their welcome, though, in their own community 'before they may leave for some other location. If a shelter is nearby, they may go there first, where efforts are made to reunite the youth with his or her own family, or to find some other type of services.

With appropriate support services, including family counseling and other short-term care, conceivably, some long-term care, that may end the cycle of running. If a shelter is not available, and the youth and the family do not receive the necessary services, the youth ends up on the street. Frequently, that sets up a pattern of running away—a dangerous pattern that may take a youth farther and farther from home, and closer and closer to serious danger.

If the scenario for a runaway youth does not include safe shelter, a variety of situations may occur. These youth, who are already taught to be a victim in their families, will certainly face physical problems—hunger, lack of shelter and lack of health care. These needs open him or her up for exploitation by any number of unscrupulous people.

It is common for runaways to be forced to steal, con, deal drugs, and prostitute themselves to stay alive. Survival on the streets is not a simple matter. It is frequently a horrible parody of the very same suffering they ran away from in their own home, where drug abuse, child abuse, sexual abuse, family violence and economic stress all may have contributed to their family's dysfunction and the child's choice to leave.

Unfortunately, kids do not always believe they can go back to their homes, since people using them on the streets perpetrate that lie. But even more tragic is the fact that some families do not even want them back; they have enough problems, and one less teenager at home is OK by them. They are stuck with nowhere to go and nowhere to turn.

Not only does this scenario point up the grim realities facing youth on the run and the needs for safe shelter; it implies that these runaways are multiproblem youth. Their experiences include the side of life that many of us would choose to ignore. These youth, because of their backgrounds, are difficult to work with, and shelter staff need special training to identify the problems and to then deal with them. It is not enough to just house a child and turn him or her loose without specialized intervention and treatment.

Shelter staff are trained to deal with physical needs, and in most cases with chemical dependency problems. What staff are frequently unprepared to deal with is a youth with a history of sexual abuse. This problem affects a high percentage of youth, both male and female. Workers frequently do not know what signs to look for to see if sexual abuse is a problem, and the right questions are not asked. While the youth is in shelter care, her or she may act out in sexually inappropriate ways, and without the knowledge that they were a victim, the staff will not know how to deal with that child.

In addition, other services such as incest victims groups may provide valuable assistance if the problem is known, and such groups are available. Another serious situation facing shelter care services is the large number of children who were victims of sexual abuse who are now, as adolescents, perpetrating sexual abuse on other children. This is happening with alarming frequency and we are ill-equipped professionally to treat or even to simply deal with these adolescents. More knowledge based on research and treatment is needed in order to train staff adequately to cope with this alarming and dangerous situation.

In order to provide the shelters and the trained staff to appropriately care for runaways, the States need Federal assistance. Iowa does not provide for any financial assistance to shelters that serve runaways that are not involved in the juvenile justice system. And an across-the-board 4-percent cut recently ordered by our Governor will seriously affect programs that do serve the system involved children. Our shelters are really experiencing some financial problems.

Consequently, the beds that are available are the ones that serve the youth that are in the system, that will bring in at least a small amount of money to support these shelters. The youth that cannot be served in a shelter may end up in a psychiatric facility, probably not very appropriate, but at least better than jail or the streets.

We recently had a couple of teenage girls show up at the shelter. We had been notified by a concerned relative that they were probably coming in. There were no beds available. And these two 16-year-olds, who were doing nothing more than saying, "I need a break from home, I have problems," ended up in a psychiatric facility. Anybody who has ever experienced those kinds of things can quickly feel crazy, if they are not really crazy in the first place—

those are not very appropriate terms to use—but for an adolescent, that is a pretty serious place to be sent if they do not really need to be there.

Federal support for both shelters and for increased levels of training and/or support are vital to caring for our youth in need. Added to the problem is the potential loss of revenue-sharing dollars to our cities and communities throughout the State. In Iowa, a lot of those dollars are directly funneled to human service programs, particularly those serving runaways not involved in the system. Loss of these programs will be devastating to our services. We are anticipating losing one of our best prevention resources, as just one of the examples that go on in our own city, so we are facing serious loss.

Protecting our children from the exploitation they face on the streets, and giving them the opportunity to grow up and lead a productive, healthy life should be a top priority for the leaders of our nation. And I might add again, I am pleased to see that there is attention being given to those matters.

We hope to hear about your support further down the line.

Thank you, Senator.

Senator HAWKINS. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Gehring follows:]

Testimony
by
Susan G. Gehring
Iowa Runaway, Homeless and Missing Youth Prevention/Education Center

Youth & Shelter Services, Inc.
Ames, Iowa 50010

before
U.S. Senate Subcommittee on
Family, Drugs and Alcoholism
Paula Hawkins, Chairperson

Thank you for this opportunity to share with you some of the problems facing runaways on the streets and what happens to them when shelter and services are not available.

Youth and Shelter Services (YSS) began nearly fifteen years ago as a volunteer effort by citizens in Story County, Iowa, who believed that troubled, homeless young people deserved safety and shelter. During the years since its inception, YSS has grown to become a professional, multi-faceted organization serving six Central Iowa counties with a variety of services encompassing substance abuse and family crisis prevention, intervention and treatment. YSS believes that the family and the community are the best places for resolving crisis, healing and strengthening our families. We focus then on local services readily accessible to the community. In addition, YSS has established a statewide program, The Iowa Runaway, Homeless and Missing Youth Prevention and Education Center (the Center) to spearhead efforts in educating Iowans about runaways and what we can do to prevent children from having to turn to life on the street. This effort is supported by a Federal grant and is one of five such programs in the United States.

Unfortunately, these beginning efforts to prevent runaways are not enough to remedy the dangers faced by those youth currently on the run or those that, even with the best of prevention efforts still believe their only valid choice is to leave home. These dangers are real and ever-present and tragically there is a serious lack of safe places for these youth to find refuge. Shelters are few and frequently full. Foster care and other immediate crisis type services are also in high demand and short supply. Jail is an unacceptable and dangerous alternative, a place where many children try to kill themselves. The streets are their only choice.

A youth does not typically run to a distant place the first few times. They go somewhere fairly safe--a refuge from the chaos of home. They may run to a neighbor or friend's house. They "wear out their welcome" in their own community before leaving for some other location. If a shelter is nearby they may go there first, where efforts are made to reunite the youth with his or her family. With appropriate support services, (family counseling, etc.) that may end the cycle of running. If a shelter is not available and the youth and family do not receive services, the youth ends up on the street. Frequently that sets up a pattern of running away--a dangerous pattern that may take a youth farther and farther from home and closer to serious danger.

If the scenario for a runaway youth does not include safe shelter a variety of situations may occur. The youth will certainly face physical problems: hunger, lack of shelter and lack of health care. These needs open him or her up for exploitation by any number of unscrupulous people. It is common for runaways to be forced to steal, con, deal drugs and prostitute themselves to stay alive. Survival on the streets is not a simple matter. It's frequently a horrible parody of the very same suffering they ran from in their home, where drug abuse, child abuse, sexual abuse, family violence and economic stress all may have contributed to their family's dysfunction and the child's choice to leave. Unfortunately, kids don't always believe they can go back since the people using them on the streets perpetrate that lie, but even more tragic is the fact that some families don't even want them back, they have enough problems and one less teenager is OK by them. They are stuck with nowhere to go and no one to turn to.

Not only does this scenario point up the grim realities facing youth on the run and the needs for safe shelter, it implies that these runaways are multi-problem youth. Their experiences include the side of life that many of us would choose to ignore. These youth, because of their backgrounds, are difficult to work with and shelter staff need special training to identify the problems and to then deal with them. It is not enough to just house a child and turn him or her loose without specialized intervention and treatment.

Shelter staff are trained to deal with physical needs and in most cases with chemical dependency problems. What staff are frequently unprepared to deal with is a youth with a history of sexual abuse. This problem affects a high percentage of youth, both male and female. Workers frequently don't know what signs to look for to see if sexual abuse is a problem and the right questions are not asked. While the youth is in shelter care, he or she may act out in sexually inappropriate ways and without the knowledge that they were a victim, staff will not know how to deal with that child. In addiction, other services, such as incest victims groups may provide valuable assistance if the problem is known. Another serious situation facing shelter care services is the large number of children that were victims of sexual abuse who are now, as adolescents, perpetrating sexual abuse on other children. This is happening with alarming frequency and we are ill-equipped professionally to treat or even simply deal with these adolescents. More knowledge based on research and treatment is needed in order to train staff to adequately to cope with this alarming and dangerous situation.

In order to provide the shelters and the trained staff to appropriately care for runaways, the states need Federal assistance. Iowa does not provide for any financial assistance to shelters that serve runaways that aren't involved in the juvenile justice system. Consequently, beds are filled with youth that will bring in at least a small amount of money. The youth that can't be served in a shelter may end up in a psychiatric facility, probably not very appropriate but at least better than jail or the streets. Federal support for both shelters and for increased levels of training and/or support are vital to caring for our youth in need. Protecting them from the exploitation they face on the street and giving them the opportunity to grow up and lead a productive, healthy life should be a top priority for the leaders of our Nation.

Senator **Hawkins**. John Cottrell, is Director of youth services with the Council of Churches, welcome.

Mr. **Cottrell**. Thank you.

As a brief background, I would like to provide you with a history of our agency's involvement with runaway youth services.

The Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport has been providing services to runaway and otherwise homeless youth since 1975. During this 10-year time period, the Council's program has grown from a small, one-person Host Home Program to a youth services department which operates two programs and employs 15 people.

The Youth in Crisis Program became operational in 1978 as an expansion of the original Host Home Program. This program provides 24-hour crisis intervention and shelter services to runaway and otherwise homeless youth and their families in the Greater Bridgeport area. The program currently receives over 500 referrals a year.

Streetworks, a new project initiated by our agency, targets services to chronic runaway youth who are not currently receiving services from other programs. During the first 3 months of this project, our workers have been in contact with over 100 young people on the streets of Bridgeport. Clearly, the number of young people running from their homes in our area of the country, for whatever the reason, is at best alarming.

During the past 10 years, we have learned a great deal from the young people and families we have worked with. We know that the vast majority of young people who run from home remain in the immediate geographical area. We know that the majority of young people who run away from home are running from a situation they feel powerless to change. We know that the majority of families from whom young people run want their children to return home and are willing to work on their problems. We know that not every young person who runs from home becomes a prostitute or a pusher.

But we also know that any young person alone on the streets is at great risk of being exploited by people who have nothing but their own interests in mind.

How many young people are being exploited by pimps and drug pushers in Connecticut? It is difficult to say. We are just beginning to get a sense through our Streetworks Program of how large the population really is. These young people, unfortunately, are much less likely to reach out for help from those programs which are there to serve them.

I can report, however, that the young people from this population, whom we have been lucky enough to reach are in great danger, both physically and emotionally. Their stories are indeed tragic. It is through these young people that we are attempting to put together a general profile which will hopefully lead toward increased positive intervention.

One very clear characteristic which is emerging in our programs is that the vast majority of these young people were identified to be in need of help at some earlier point in their lives. Their case histories read like social service road maps. Time after time, good people with good programs have spent time and resources trying to help these young people. Due to the lack of success, either the service provider, the young person or both gave up.

I have felt the frustration of trying to convince a young person that there may be a better way. It has been a few years, but I can clearly remember being called to the Bridgeport Detention Center to interview a 15-year-old boy who had been arrested for selling an ounce of pot. It had been his first arrest, and the courts were hoping to divert him from the criminal justice system. I will never forget the lesson he gave me regarding his sense of reality. After listening to what I had to offer, he thanked me and told me that when I could hand him a job that paid as well as selling drugs, I should look him up. I asked him about the risks involved, and he chuckled. He claimed that the kids that worked for his boss were protected. He was confident that nobody would mess with him on the street, and if they tried, the boss would be there to take care of him.

When I asked him about the possibility of spending time in jail, his response was, "It is no big thing. If I get busted, I can handle it. Lots of guys do time. It ain't so bad."

I made a quick notation in the file that the client had refused service and headed out for the next referral, hoping it would be more successful.

This leads me to a second characteristic or problem. That is the fact that we, as service providers to runaway and homeless youth, usually come into contact with these young people after the pimps and pushers of the world have already had their shot at offering the young people "a better life." This puts us in the unenviable position of making a counteroffer.

I can understand that to a young person who has never felt love or a sense of belonging, that the illegalities of prostitution or drug sales are meaningless, if in their minds it provides them with a sense of belonging and worth.

I realize how difficult it is for most Americans to understand why young people would want to live this type of lifestyle. We view it as a very painful and threatening way to exist. Without a doubt, it is. The fact is, there are thousands of young people in our country who live it every day.

I have a basic reason for wanting to be here today. I do not believe that the problem of exploitation is hopeless. I do realize, however, that the problem is extremely complex. It has become a big business due to the huge supply and demand.

Viewing this exploitation of runaways as a business, the question for me becomes: How do we kill the business? I believe the way to do that is twofold.

First, we must work on reducing the demand. Stricter penalties for those involved with exploitation of runaways would be helpful. This is not just the pimps and pushers, but also those people caught paying for the services the pimps and pushers are providing through the exploitation of young people.

At the same time, we must find ways to cut off the supply. We must continue to develop and test new approaches to reach these young people. In addition, I feel we need to examine our systems to provide those people mandated to protect children and youth with the resources and methods which would enable them to have a greater impact much earlier in the life of the child and family.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today. I hope that as you continue to examine this problem, you will consider the future as well as the present. I respect the seriousness of the decisions you and your colleagues must make each day. But I can think of nothing more serious than the healthy development of the young people and families for whom you are making these decisions.

Thank you.

Senator HAWKINS. Thank you, John.

Susan, in your testimony, you made the point that runaway children often stay in the community, in relative safety, before they run away to a more distant, more dangerous city.

What are your personal views of the practice that most police departments employ, to wait 24 hours before they list a child as missing, or to begin an active search for that child?

Ms. GEHRING. We have worked on that situation in Iowa quite extensively. We have a Missing Persons Clearinghouse now available that can provide for immediate release of that child's name. It has only been in existence since July, so we have yet to see whether that makes any difference or not.

I feel that immediate work is probably the very best thing that we can do. We just two weeks ago had a child from a small community—population probably under 1,000—that had run away from home twice before, had not been reported, nobody had made any intervention. The third time the child ran away, he killed himself. He had already called out for help twice. Friends came back later, a minister said, "I knew he ran away, but gee, we did not think anything of it, and we did not call, and when he came back a day or so later, it was no big deal."

Possibly, if somebody would have let us know, would have let the system know, we could have intervened in time to save that child's life. So I think immediate action is probably very necessary.

Along with that goes educating the police about what they can do, and how to keep kids there, and all of the things—we have police who will not pick up runaways because they do not feel there is anything they can do. That is not necessarily true. There may be some alternatives and some systems out there they can work with. But you hear them time and time again, saying, "I am not going to pick up that kid, because there is not a thing I can do. I will just pick him up, and he will be back out on the streets in 2 minutes." We are starting to work on that, but it is a long road.

Senator HAWKINS. Susan, I know that there is a controversy in the Iowa Legislature regarding whether running away should be a crime.

Ms. GEHRING. Yes.

Senator HAWKINS. What are your thoughts on that?

Ms. GEHRING. We worked very hard to make running away not a crime in our State There was a lot of study done, a considerable amount of time and effort and concern and lobbying, and a lot of activity went into determining that running away was indeed not a criminal act and should not be something that a child should be put in jail for, that indeed, a child put in jail for running away is probably at more serious risk, in some cases, than a child is on the streets.

The events that have led to that recurring in Iowa, that issue recurring in Iowa, have been the discovery of a number of teenage prostitutes in one of our communities. And the response to that immediately is, rather than to do something and to institute any kind of programs or make sure that the treatment is available and the services are there, is, "Well, by golly, we'd better lock these kids up, because they are in trouble and they are in danger, and that is what we will do for them," rather than seeing that as something to do "to" them, which I see putting a child in jail is all about.

There has been a task force initiated in that community, and in the past 4 months, they have studied those issues. Their recommendations were just made public last week, at a joint subcommittee hearing in the Iowa Legislature, and they did come up with a recommendation that that not be offered as a solution; that the solution we first need to look to is full funding and support for those services that are already available, to make sure that immediately, we get to the problem, rather than letting it go on to the point where we have got kids who are chronic runaways.

So, the issue is still alive, but we are beginning to see a concerted effort again to re-educate the public.

Senator **Hawkins**. We have a long way to go.

Tom, I toured the Youth Crisis Center in Jacksonville and helped open the Beach Program, and I was impressed with the quality of the services offered there. The Transient Youth Center, I understand, was the first runaway program in Florida, and it is still one of the busiest.

Do you accommodate any child that needs your services?

Mr. **Patania**. Yes; we do. Except for the children who are either actively psychotic children, or children who are wanted by the law for custody, or children that are intoxicated or refusing treatment at the hospital. Otherwise, we will take any child between the ages of 10 and 17.

Senator **Hawkins**. Are you seeing more children than you have in the past?

Mr. **Patania**. Yes; we are. And one of the nice things about what is happening in Jacksonville, we are seeing more children being brought in by their parents, saying, "We need help." That is due to the effort that we are trying to reach parents while there is still crisis in the home, prior to a runaway or throwaway episode. We feel it is really important that we do that, because otherwise, if these crises go ignored by the parents and the child, the child withdraws, and the child eventually runs away to the street, and of course, we know what happens there.

So that is a hopeful sign, that we are accessing the families that are in crisis, and they are seeing us as a source of help. In fact, they consider us the "emergency room" for youth in crisis in northeast Florida, which is really nice, because if you are perceived as a helping resource for families, then they will access you, and you will reach them before the family just blows up and the child pops out in a runaway episode.

Senator **Hawkins**. Isn't that one of the concerns here, that the child will run away before you have access to the family?

Mr. PATANIA. Yes; and that is something we are fighting against, because again, back to the focus, which is the family. Most of the children that we are dealing with, 60 percent of the kids that we deal with at the Youth Crisis Center are from Jacksonville; although we are the gateway to Florida, a majority are from Jacksonville, and they are from middle- and upper-middle-income families. And again, they are from families that need help in changing the way they have done things in the past. The way they have done things in the past has not worked for them, and so they need help in changing. So we work with the entire family. If you separate the child from the family, you are really addressing symptoms and not the problem.

Senator HAWKINS. Bill, do you have an estimate of how many runaway children in Florida are simply locked up, placed in secure detention rather than being served by runaway or youth services?

Mr. BENTLEY. Yes; of the 2,000-plus kids that were locked up this past year, almost none got any service from any of our shelters.

What has happened in Florida—and I think Iowa might pay attention to what is going on in Florida now—is we have begun to come full circle, regretfully. A decade ago, we decided that running away was not a crime, that the problem was a family dysfunction. What has happened is we have not gotten resource for the judges to use, for the community to access, and what is happening now is we are locking up more kids, before even giving them a chance to receive a service, because first off, a lot of police do not realize that the service is there—that is our problem; we need to do more in the way of outreach and education. Second, they do not know that there are alternative resources beyond detention, which is again one of our problems that we have to begin to address as a community. And third, they do not think that what we are doing makes a difference. But what we have tried to say to them is it does not make a difference if you do not bring the kids to us. It becomes a "What came first, the chicken or the egg?" problem. But very few of the kids have gotten any front-end service at all before getting locked up—which is a very real problem in Florida, and we are trying to address it.

Senator HAWKINS. We thank you for your participation. We look forward to working with all of you in finding solutions to the various problems with which we are faced. We also must look to the private sector and ask for their help. They have responded by assisting, for example, the Center for Missing and Exploited Children in the effort to reduce child victimization. But we must continue to ask for their support and the support of the public in our fight against the exploitation of children.

We thank you for testifying today.

Our last witness today is June Bucy, executive director of the National Network of Runaway and Youth Services.

STATEMENT OF JUNE BUCY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE NATIONAL NETWORK OF RUNAWAY AND YOUTH SERVICES, INC., WASHINGTON, DC

Ms. BUCY. Senator Hawkins, I want to really thank you for this hearing. I would like to salute the children's Senator. Your work with children, with families that are troubled by the actions of their children and are frustrated in what they can do, has certainly been recognized not only by the service providers around this country, but by the public, and we hope most fully by your constituents, because you have really played an important role.

One of those roles has been to be available when you are needed. As you know, the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Runaway Youth Act last year was not smooth sailing all the way, and we are very, very aware that it was your efforts that put that over.

I would like to be so bold as to suggest that the Appropriations Committee is meeting this afternoon, and if you could speak with Senator Hatfield and tell him of some of the emotions that obviously you have felt this morning, as the plight of these children has been spelled out, requesting that more money be appropriated so that programs can continue to expand, so there will be new programs, but that old programs in the effort to establish new ones, would not lose money—which is what has happened for the last 2 years. While the funding has stayed the same, and new programs have come into being, it has been at the expense of other programs.

We have talked with these people who have had their funding reduced. They have to lose staff; they do not have enough money to pay their highly qualified staff.

When I was working at a program in Galveston, which I did for 12 years before coming here to Washington, I was reduced to saying to people as they came, wanting very, very much to work with us, because we, too, were known as the most outstanding social service program in town, particularly for young people and their families, I had to ask people, "Are you sure you can afford to work for us? We cannot afford to pay you a salary on which you can support your family."

We are driving from our shelters people who are serious about careers with youth services, because we simply cannot afford to pay them. Many of the people that are there come from two-parent families, where there is another wage earner, or they are very young people who have not yet had to face the business of buying their homes and supporting families.

When we talk about needing new staff and needing more money, we are really talking about hanging onto people who have the experience, have the skills to work with these desperately needy families and children.

My name is June Bucy, incidentally, and I work with the National Network of Runaway and Youth Services. We are a national nonprofit organization that has members in every State. There are over 700 agencies and coalitions that are members of the network. We also coalition with others. We are members of the national assembly of the National Collaboration of Youth, which is a group of the major mainstream youth service organizations in this country, of the Ad Hoc Coalition for Juvenile Justice, and of the Youth Employment Coalition.

I say this to let you know that the youth service business is a very sophisticated business these days. We are not just one-dimensional programs of helping little runaways who have had some spat with their families and will soon return. Runaway centers are programs that are working in their own communities and forming coalitions with others across the States, as our State network people have just told you, and across the Nation, to really link these services together.

Some of our linkage is difficult because the system itself makes it difficult. I think that is true in the reference to the Juvenile Justice Act and the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, and the Missing Children's Act, which are parts of the same bill, but are administered by different Federal and State agencies. One of the problems is that we get different data because we use different definitions.

I personally think that using very large numbers almost immobilizes us. It not only causes people to wonder what in the world are we talking about when we use such excessive numbers, but it makes the public feel that nothing can be done. And, as the panelists from the programs have just told you, that is not true.

All of us have not only these awful stories of the things that have happened to young people, but we have success stories, too. It has been 3 years since I was in Galveston, and I often get calls from young people with whom we worked, and I hear from the staff down there about how well those children have turned out.

I got a call just last week from a young man who is on the honor roll at the University of Southern California in his junior year and has an offer of a scholarship to go to law school. These are great kids. I guess if there is any message I have at all, it is that they are wonderful, wonderful children. They are not kids who would sit there and let their families abuse them, would let the problems of their families so overwhelm them that they cannot do anything. These are kids who want something for themselves.

Senator Dodd asked if they made mature and rational decisions. They may be rational, but they are rarely mature. These kids have a sense of magic in the world—you could see that from the things in "Streetwise"—that they want the cars, the jewels—very unrealistic, but they are big things.

The youngsters who run from their homes are the kids who are saying, "There is nothing here for me. I can't stand this. I'm going to get out." And they are looking for something, and they will avail themselves of the opportunity. And there are many, many success stories.

There is one other thing that I am very concerned about. As we look at these children, we talk about their families, and we talk about the problems on the street, I think we need to focus more attention on our foster care and our child protective system. There has been indication—and I get this from a New York study of homeless children—that 50 percent of those children had been in foster care before they came to the street. There was also a statement that 53 percent of the children in foster care in New York were destined for independent living. There was no expectation that they would ever go to a foster home or ever be able to return home. And those kids are simply not being given the skills to survive on the street. We are setting up for ourselves a whole cadre of people to be homeless in the future.

I think as we get data about those young people, we need to look at what our system is doing.

I have the very distinct feeling that kids fall through the cracks, that they are never declared missing, that nobody ever looks for them. We found in our study of runaways last year that there are many children who are turned away from shelters. Most often, this is because the licensing simply will not allow those children to come into facilities that arealready at capacity. I was in Louisiana a couple weeks ago, and the State people were saying, "If you take a child in past your licensing, you will lose your license." That is a good goal, in that we want children to be well cared for in safe places. But I think it is our systems that are a real problem for these children, in limiting necessary resources.

These are also chaotic families. One bit of data that has struck me in two realms—one, the most accurate data, the only time that I know of that the Government has really set about trying to find out how many children there are out there, was done on the basis of a telephone survey that went into people's homes and they asked, Do you have an adolescent, and if so, was he or she away from home without their parents' permission. That study is where the basic number came from on runaways.

A study that was done in New York of all the shelters said, however, that only 25 percent of the families of these children had lived in the same place for the previous 12 months. Forty-one percent of the families had been living in one to three places. And 23 percent of the families had moved and had lived in four or more places.

My sense of it is that these kids are coming from restless families, and as they move from place to place, they often leave a child behind. I remember one little boy who came to the shelter after school 1 day. He had gone home. He lived in a trailer—and the trailer was not there, much less his family; I mean, it had vanished, and it was days before his family could be located.

These runaways are children from families who have all sorts of problems themselves.

One of the questions you asked someone today was what are the signs of running away, and what should parents do if they feel their children are thinking about running. I think the first thing parents need to do is look at their own lives to see if they are frightened, by some threat to their welfare, by a marriage that is about to break up, or because they are about to be evicted from an apartment. It is those things that children are running from, the tensions that are caused by the family problems.

If parents when they are in great tension will learn to include the kids, to tell the kids what they are worried about, or to listen to the children's concerns and let the family be a strength to each other. This is the kind of thing that the shelters and other youth programs teach families to do, to find out what is giong on with each person, to pull their strengths together, to set some goals, and to work toward those goals.

The demand for the services of these children on the street is the real crisis problem. Boys and girls suffer from a variety of risks because of the great demand for their bodies—the beatings and the disease and the pregnancy and the drug and alcohol abuse—they are forced into an underground so twisted and dark that many will never emerge—but many will. And good street work has learned to break into that cycle, and the programs that Ms. Hardy was talking about are very, very good programs, and we would urge you to continue them.

The problem of homeless children has devastating effects on the individuals, and great social consequences. The costs to society include long-term dependency through adult homelessness; criminal activity, and the loss of potentially productive citizens. We feel that this does not have to happen. We care about these children in our country. There is a major result that the attention to missing childrens has accomplished. It is to get us in touch with the fact that we really do care about our children. I think once Americans realize the plight that these young people are in, that they will want the services and the protection provided to these young people.

I thank you again for this opportunity to share with you.

Senator HAWKINS. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Bucy and additional material supplied follow:]

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TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CHILDREN, FAMILY, DRUGS, AND ALCOHOLISM

UNITED STATES SENATE

ON BEHALF OF

THE NATIONAL NETWORK OF RUNAWAY AND YOUTH SERVICES

BY
JUNE BUCY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
THE NATIONAL NETWORK OF RUNAWAY AND YOUTH SERVICES

OCTOBER 1, 1985

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TESTIMONY ON RUNAWAY, HOMELESS, AND "STREET KIDS" PRESENTED TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON CHILDREN, FAMILY, DRUGS, AND ALCOHOLISM, UNITED STATES SENATE BY JUNE BUCY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL NETWORK OF RUNAWAY AND YOUTH SERVICES

Chairman Hawkins and members of the Subcommittee, my name is June Bucy and I am the Executive Director of the National Network of Runaway and Youth Services. The Network is a national, nonprofit organization comprised of more than 700 agencies and coalitions of agencies across America that provide services to runaway, homeless, and other troubled youth and their families. These services include street outreach, shelter care, family counseling, and a wide variety of crisis intervention services. Our membership covers every state in the nation and includes groups such as the Florida Network of Youth and Family Services, the New England Consortium for Families and Youth, and state-wide associations in Indiana, Ohio, and Okalhoma.

I greatly appreciate the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee on Children, Family, Drugs, and Alcoholism on the growing problems of runaway and homeless youth and "street kids". Before I begin my testimony, Senator Hawkins, I want to express the National Network's sincerest appreciation to you for your most outstanding leadership on behalf of our nation's children and youth. There is absolutely no doubt that your diligence, courage, and wisdom has directly resulted in landmark legislation and public policy which makes our nation's children safer and healthier. I am expressing my heartfelt thanks to you not only in my role as the executive of a national youth services agency, but also as the mother of three and the grandmother of three young children. You have earned the lasting respect of every parent, child, and family in America.

Madam Chairman, your leadership and caring for America's exploited and abused children is demonstrated again by virtue of your holding this hearing. It is important that this Subcommittee and all other key policymakers understand and learn more about the scope and severity of America's "street kids"-- long-term runaway, throwaway, or otherwise homeless youth who fend for themselves on the street, usually by illegal activities and often as the victims of predatory adults.

Whereas the number of street kids who have become involved with drugs, prostitution, and pornography is a subset of the overall runaway and homeless youth population, I briefly want to frame the problem. The most reliable national estimates are that there are between 1.3 and 1.5 million runaway and homeless youth each year. These troubled young people are in every state and community in our nation, represent every racial and ethnic population, and are from families covering all income levels. A substantial number of these young people can be described as multi-problem. They have experienced failure in school, have abused drugs and alcohol, have been victims of abuse, neglect or sexual exploitation, and many have had negative contact with the law enforcement system. Most important to remember is that these youth are from families. While the youth's running away may be the most publicly obvious behavior, the problems that led to this behavior often involve the entire family.

As you and the members of the Subcommittee well know, federal support for services to these children, youth, and families comes from the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA, Title III of P.L. 98-473). The RHYA, currently funded at $23.25 million, provides support for 273 shelters across the country and a select variety of special initiatives such as the National Runaway Switchboard (a hotline for youth and their parents) and demonstration projects on missing children, juvenile prostitution, teenage suicide prevention, and family reunification.

Madam Chairman, I know that your benchmark efforts around the Missing Children's Assistance Act helped the nation develop an even greater understanding of the real and potential kinds of exploitation suffered by many runaway and homeless youth. For many of these youth, drug abuse and dependency, sexual exploitation and prostitution, and other illicit behaviors are the only ways that these youth can survive on the streets. Again, it is important that we understand the scope of the "street kid" problem.

As is the case with all the national statistics/estimates, the street kids numbers are volatile. Estimates on the numbers of runaways/homeless/street kids range from 1 million to 4 million such youth each year in the United States. The National Network believes that the often-cited estimate of 1.3 million per year is a reliable number. An October, 1983 National Program Inspection (conducted by the Office of Inspector General, Department of Health and Human Services) states that of the overall runaway/homeless youth population, " about 25% are hard core 'street kids' in serious trouble, of which three quarters engage in some type of criminal activity and half in prostitution specifically".

If these percentages are applied to the 1.3 million youth, the following estimates are derived:

325,000	hard core street kids
243,750	youth engaged in some type of criminal activity
162,500	youth involved in prostitution

It is important to note that these numbers reflect estimates of youth for a year's period of time, not the number of youth involved in such activity on any single given night. Analogous to the tragedy surrounding Adam Walsh and his family, I am sure that you, Senator Hawkins, and the members of this Subcommittee agree that if there is even one child being victimized and sexaully-exploited on the streets, that that is one child too many.

In the remainder of my testimony, I first will focus on some of the specific problems facing street kids and their families, and offer some strategies for addressing these problems. My testimony will close with some policy recommendations for consideration by Congress, the Administration, and other key policymakers.

Who are the street kids and what happens to them ? Two recent media pieces-- the documentary "Streetwise" produced by Cheryl McCall and "Why Children Run Away" the August 18th cover story in Parade Magazine by Dotson Rader-- have graphically shown the fear, danger, and exploitation of street life. Furthermore, the problems of drug abuse and sexaul exploitation are not confined to Seattle, San Diego, New Orleans, and San Francisco. Adult drug dealers, pimps, and pedophiles prey upon susceptible young street kids in Miami, Boston, and every other major city in America.

I appreciate that it is difficult for adults who do not work with these children and youth to understand the how's and why's these street kids become trapped in such ugly and damaging lifestyles. The general public's unfamiliarity with the lives and stories of these youth before they have fled to the streets often leads outside observers to negatively (and simplistically) label these children as delinquent hedonists and rebels. In fact, almost all current research and case studies show that the situations of these youth are far more complex. Specifically:

- A July, 1985 report by the National Network entitled, To Whom Do They Belong ? A Profile of America's Runaway and Homeless Youth and the Programs That Help Them shows the results of a nationwide survey of 210 youth services agencies. 31% of the respondent agencies reported an increase in the number of sexually abused (at home and on the street) youth coming to the shelters. 29% of the agencies cited an increase in physcially abused youth, and 29% noted that drug and alcohol abuse were growing problems.

- A 1984 study conducted by the New York State Psychiatric Institute and the Columbia University College of Physicians showed that 50% of the runaway youth interviewed (n=118) left because of the violence and abuse they experienced at home; 82% had "significant psychiatric disabilities"; 49% had attempted or seriously threatened suicide.

- The previously-mentioned DHHS Inspector General's report found that 36% of the youth run from physical or sexual abuse; 44% run because of other severe long-term problems; 20% because of temporary or less severe crises.

My purpose in detailing these statistics is two-fold. First, it is important to dispel the notion that street kids are care-free, vagabond youth who have taken to the streets as part of some kind of counter-culture, rebellious, adolescent acting-out behavior. One false assumption in this myth is that these youth have loving, welcoming homes waiting for them, if they would only clean up their lives.

While a small percentage of runaways and street kids do fit under the stereotype, the overwhelming evidence is that most do not. Many street kids are push-outs and throwaways— youth who have been forced out of their homes by their parents or guardians. Others have fled because of abuse, neglect, incest, or other forms of exploitation. Most street kids have dropped or been thrown out of school, have had negative experiences with the police and juvenile court, have few (if any) employment skills, have abused alcohol and drugs, and have no stable family situation to return to. Unless these street youth are attracted to and receive the services they need, it is highly likely that they either will apprentice into the next generation of adult homeless or become totally dependent on publicly financed institutional and incarceration systems.

Again, Madam Chairman, I want to emphasize that not all, not even the majority of, runaway and homeless youth are involved in prostitution, drug abuse, and child pornography. But the numbers of these youth who are long-term drug abusers, incest victims, sexually exploited on the street, and have multiple serious problems seems to be increasing. The next horror story awaiting these children is AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). We already know from the press of children who have contracted this disease. The ever-increasing potential that young male prostitutes will catch and pass on this disease truly is a horror story almost beyond comprehension.

RHYA programs as one effective strategy for getting kids off the streets. Clearly, there are no simple, quick-fix solutions to solving the complicated problems of street youth. All evidence, however, indicates that the kinds of services provided by RHYA-funded programs offer the greatest promise.

The National Network's recent report indicates that shelters provide an average of 13 different types of services to youth, including shelter, individual and family counseling, remedial education, pre-employment training, foster care placement, drug and alcohol counseling, hotline services, and more. The 210 agencies surveyed in our report showed a "positive determination" rate of 57%--that is, 57% of the more than 50,000 youth who received at least one night of shelter were either reunited with their families or placed in a safe living environment. The National Network believes that this figure is probably lower than the actual number of youth whose lives and circumstances have been measurably improved by virtue of their involvement with a shelter program. This number may be low in that shelter staff are not always able to maintain contact with and track the progress of youth and their families for an extended time following the youth's stay at the shelter or in a host home. Some programs had much higher positive placement rates than others. More research is needed to determine if this difference is a function of intake criteria, the respective agency's policies and program design, or the availability of long-term community resources for homeless youth.

Hard core street youth are an especially difficult population to serve, at least initially. One major reason that they seek out and stay on the streets--no matter how gruesome such an existence might be-- is that these youth are very distrustful of most adults. Most of these youths's experiences with adults have been extremely damaging. Even though similar (and worse) such abuse continues during their stay on the streets, by participating in such abuse on the streets, the youths's "anti-system" feelings are validated.

One reason that Cheryl McCall (both in Life Magazine and with the movie "Streetwise") and Dotson Rader (3 Parade Magazine cover stories) were able to poignantly capture the stories of street kids was that both writers were able to earn the youths's trust. This same trust-building is what RHYA-funded youth shelters do and do well. Through a mix of comprehensive services with an emphasis on counseling, shelter staff are able to show and convince tens of thousands of these troubled youth that they do have bona fide options for getting off the streets and having healthy, law-abiding lives.

My point here, Madam Chairman, is that the most feasible and cost-effective solution to helping these youth is to strengthen the federal investment in the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. Let me assure you and the members of the Subcommittee that I am not suggesting that Congress simply "throw money at the problem". Nor am I calling for an expensive, new demonstration initiative.

The National Network is recommending that adequate funds and resources be made available under the existing RHYA program, and that Congress and the Administration provide sufficient funds for a well-thought out, modest expansion of new shelters in unserved/underserved communities. Parenthetically, RHYA shelters make maximum use of their federal dollars in terms of leveraging other state, local, and private funds. The National Network's recent report showed that of the 156 RHYA shelters that responded to our survey, RHYA funds made up an average of 31% of the respective agency's budget. RHYA programs are models of public/private and federal/state partnerships.

The results of the National Network's nationwide survey identify those needs which shelter programs have in serving street kids and other runaway and homeless children and youth, specifically:

- Staff Training - 74% of the agencies cited the need for more specialized staff training to work with the complex problems of these youth and their families on issues such as suicide prevention, working with sexual abuse and incest victims, drug and alcohol abuse, and others.
- Continuum of Services - 72% of the agencies identified the need to extend their services into prevention and aftercare areas such as street outreach and followup counseling. This need is consistent with the findings of the 1983 GAO Report, "Federally Supported Centers Provide Needed Services for Runaways and Homeless Youths". Additional outreach services will identify youth at-risk of victimization earlier so that preventive services can be more effective. Increased followup will enhance the staying power of the services provided while the youth was at the shelter.
- Independent Living Programs - 67% of the agencies expressed the need for independent living programs for their 16-18 year old youth who have little possibility of being reunited with their families or being adopted or placed in a foster home. Independent living programs provide safe living arrangements for the youth while teaching them life management and pre-employment skills.
- Capital Improvements of the Shelter Facility - 62% of the respondents cited the need for major maintenance and housing repair. Shelters need funds for these improvements in order to meet state and local health, fire, and safety codes, as well as provide an appropriate environment for these young people.
- Better Salaries and More Staff - 86% of the programs cited the need for more staff and for salary increases for all staff. Shelters operate for 24 hours a day and work with youth and families under stress. It is a national disgrace that skilled and experienced staff who work long hours, and often are on around the clock duty, earn $8,000-$12,000/year. Volunteers are an important asset to programs, but they can only complement, not replace staff.

In closing, Madam Chairman, I want to commend the Department of Health and Human Services, specifically the Office of Human Development Services for their policy of modest expansion of new RHYA shelter programs during the last three years. Clearly, the Administration is responding to an important national problem, and these new programs will result in substantial savings in other public dollars, e.g. reduced incarceration, unemployment benefits costs, AFDC, etc., in future years.

The problem, however, is that this expansion is occuring without sufficient new monies, therefore, the budgets of existing shelters are being reduced in order to support the new programs. In your own State of Florida, Senator Hawkins, shelters in Fort Myers and Fort Lauderdale were cut more than $11,000 each for the upcoming year. Despite the decrease in the rate of increase of inflation, and despite whatever gains our economic system has enjoyed during the last two years, these cuts have been very damaging to Florida's programs and programs similarly effected in many other states across the nation. The proverbial "robbing Peter to pay Paul" makes no sense and is extremely counterproductive to the needs of these youth and their families. I strongly recommend that Congress enact "hold harmless " provisions for RHYA shelters that meet the DHHS Performance Standards and show a demonstrated record of effectiveness.

This concludes my written testimony. Again, the National Network is grateful to you Senator Hawkins for holding this hearing, and for your years of leadership on children and youth issues. I welcome any questions which you and the Subcommittee may have.

TO WHOM DO THEY BELONG?

"A Profile of America's Runaway and Homeless Youth and the Programs That Help Them"

THE NATIONAL NETWORK
OF RUNAWAY AND YOUTH SERVICES, INC.

JULY 1985

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TO WHOM DO THEY BELONG

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The National Network is grateful to Angelika and Joseph Saleh for the use of the cover photograph from their award winning documentary "Streetwise."

I. INTRODUCTION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Since Congress established the Runaway Youth Act in 1974, concerned citizens, organizations and policymakers across America have gradually become more aware of the serious problems involving runaway and homeless youth and their families. Current estimates of the number of runaway and homeless children and youth in America range from 1.3 to 2 million each year. A few studies and extrapolations suggest that there may be as many as 4 million children who run away from home for at least one night each year.

Who are these children and youth? What are their problems and how serious are they?. There are no clear, discrete categories, but the following definitions are generally accepted. It is important to remember that children frequently fall into more than one category.

"runaways" are children and youth who are away from home at least overnight without parental or caretaker permission.

"homeless" are youth who have no parental, substitute foster or institutional home. Often, these youth have left, or been urged to leave with the full knowledge or approval of legal guardians and have no alternative home.

"systems kids" are youth who have been taken into the custody of the state due to confirmed child abuse and neglect, or other serious family problems. Often these children have been in a series of foster homes, have had few opportunities to develop lasting ties with any adult, are school drop-outs, and have few independent living skills.

"street kids" are long-term runaway or homeless youth who have become adept at fending for themselves "on the street", usually by illegal activities.

"missing children" can refer to any child whose whereabouts are unknown. It is most often used to refer to children who are believed to have been abducted and victims of foul play and/or exploitation.

There is no "typical" runaway or homeless youth. They are most often youth between the ages of 12 and 18. The runaway population is comprised of male, female, White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, urban and rural youth from all socio-economic classes, from every State and Congressional District in the nation.

Many of these children, however, are "throwaways" --young people who have been forced out of their homes by their families. Others have run away because they were physically or sexually abused or victims of extreme neglect. Providers believe that a high percentage of these youth run away because their families have become "dysfunctional", that is, the family has such economic, marital, alcohol abuse or mental health problems that there has been a total breakdown between the youths and families resulting in crisis situations. Finally, some of these youths are socially and emotionally troubled. They have experienced a series of other personal failures with their schools, the law, finding a job, drug and alcohol abuse, and other adolescent situations. They see leaving as their way out.

Most youth service providers agree that, in the vast majority of cases, the young people are running *away* from something rather than *to* something. The mistaken public perception that runaway and homeless youth are on the streets because they are pursuing a carefree and rebellious lifestyle is rapidly dissolving. If policymakers, the media, and the American public learn more about the problems and tragedies these children and youth face, it is our hope that more appropriate and cost-effective services can be implemented to prevent this large group of runaway and homeless youth from apprenticing into the next generation of homeless adults.

To Whom Do They Belong? A Profile of America's Runaway and Homeless Youth and the Programs That Help Them is the report of a needs assessment conducted by the National Network of Runaway and Youth Services based on survey data gathered from 210 youth service agencies across the nation. The purpose of this survey was to capture demographic information on the runaway and homeless youth coming to shelters and find out what programs serving these youth need. The survey's methodology and findings are discussed in Sections III and IV.

The purpose of this report is to analyze the survey's findings, draw some first-level conclusions, and raise some issues for consideration by service providers, policymakers, and concerned citizens. How many youth are coming to these shelters and what kinds of problems do they have? Do these shelters "work" -- do they help these troubled young people and, when possible, their families? What additional services are needed for these youth in order to redirect their lives towards self-sufficiency and law-abiding behavior and away from a future dependency on public assistance? Finally, what can policymakers and the general public do to help these youth and the shelters that serve them? Our report does not fully answer these questions, but it does provide valuable current information -- profiles of the youth, shelter services, and identification of

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those programmatic areas in which future public and private investments on behalf of these youth and their families should be directed.

The question raised in the title, "To Whom Do They Belong?" is intended to generate further discussion on the most effective and humane approaches to helping these runaway and homeless youth. In a perfect world, the obvious answer would be to reunite all of these children with their families. Our world, however, is less than perfect. Many of these children have fled their homes because of abuse, neglect, or other serious family problems. For those youth simply to return to the same crisis situations would only lead to more problems. In fact, a 1983 survey by the Federal Department of Health and Human Services shows that about 50% of these youth have a realistic prospect of returning home or going to a foster care family. The issue facing policymakers is which service systems and programs can best resolve the problems of these youth and the attendent consequences to society which these problems exacerbate.

The National Network's response to the question "to whom do they belong" is that **these youth are best served by community-based shelters and youth programs which provide a mix of counseling and other support services in an environment where the youth feel safe.**

The National Network wishes to express its gratitude to the staff and Board of Directors of the 210 runaway and homeless youth services programs who responded to our eight page questionnaire. We are also grateful to Suzanne Tuthill, Ph.D. for assistance with the data collection and analysis. Don Mathis, the National Network's Associate Director, served as the coordinator for this project. No Federal or other public funds were used to carry out this survey or produce this report. We hope that this report contributes to greater understanding by the general public on the problems of these youth and the successes and needs of the shelter programs which help them.

Linda Reppond, Chairperson
June Bucy, Executive Director

The National Network of Runaway and Youth Services, Inc.

II. BACKGROUND ON THE NATIONAL NETWORK, RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH SERVICES, AND THIS REPORT

The National Network of Runaway and Youth Services is a national, nonprofit membership organization comprised of more than 500 regional, state, and local youth services agencies providing services to runaway, homeless, and other troubled children and youth. One of the National Network's major goals is to promote improvements in the service systems and public policies which affect these youth, other young people, and their families. In order to achieve this goal, the National Network periodically collects information on the shelters, the services they provide, and the children, youth, and families they serve.

The National Network:

- provides training and technical services on youth issues;
- publishes a bi-monthly newsletter;
- conducts an annual symposium in Washington, D.C;
- monitors federal and state policies which affect children, youth, and families;
- conducts public awareness/education activities.

In 1984, the National Network implemented a national computerized information-sharing telecommunications system (YOUTHNET) and also became the administering agency for the National Fund for Runaway Children. This program division grew out of a 1982 series of cover stories in Parade Magazine by Dotson Rader on the problems and tragedies of America's runaway, homeless and street youth. The Fund receives donations from groups and individuals and awards these funds to youth shelter programs that need support.

The National Network is administered by a member- elected, nationally representative Board of Directors who are distinguished by their expertise in youth services and policy. (See Appendix) The National Network's office is in Washington, D.C. June Bucy serves as Executive Director.

National attention on the problems of runaway and homeless youth is a relatively recent phenomenon. In 1970, the Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency held hearings on the increasing numbers of youth who were fleeing from their homes and were in danger. In 1972, concerned youth service providers and advocates met in Minnesota and recognized the national scope of the problem, the need for specific types of services for these at-risk youth, and the need for communication between shelters across the country. In September of 1974, Congress enacted, and President Ford signed, the landmark Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act and the Runaway Youth Act. In 1977, as

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Congress developed a greater understanding of the problem of homeless youth and throwaways, the law was amended as the "Runaway and Homeless Youth Act" (RHYA).

In 1975, a national survey by the Federal Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (now the Department of Health and Human Services) estimated that there were 733,000 runaway and homeless youth annually. 1984 estimates, which seem most reliable to the National Network, range from 1.3 to 1.5 million runaway and homeless youth each year.

Services to Runaway and Homeless Youth. During 1984, $23.25 million in funds were appropriated by Congress for the RHYA to support 260 runaway and homeless youth shelters across the nation. A portion of these funds were used to support the National Runaway Switchboard, a toll-free hotline and communication channel which counsels youth who are thinking about running away; provides crisis counseling and referral service to runaway and homeless youth, and brokers contact between the youth and their families. Finally, a portion of the RHYA funds go to innovative direct service projects and research directed at special issues and problems, e.g. family reunification strategies, independent living programs for older homeless teens, suicide prevention, employment and training services, juvenile prostitution, and others.

Many state and local governments fund and support services to runaway and homeless youth. New York, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Texas, Florida, Oklahoma, and other states make such funds available. Most shelters are administered by community-based non-profit agencies. Furthermore, most runaway and homeless youth shelters receive support from their local United Way, religious groups, corporations, foundations, and other private sources, including donations from individuals.

Staff and volunteers at the shelters help runaway and homeless youth, and when possible their families, by being accessible and responsive. Shelters are staffed and open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Hotline phone counseling is always available. The shelter provides a safe place for the young people to stay while these youth receive counseling, food, and other support services (e.g. health, education, family counseling, and more). The first goal of the shelter programs generally is to reunite the youth with his/her family by encouraging and helping the resolution of the intra-family problem(s). In those cases where successful family reunification is not possible, shelter staff work with the youth and other public and private social service agencies to secure the most appropriate long-term living arrangements for the youth.

In addition to crisis intervention services, many shelters across the nation provide other specialized services which the youth need, including drug and alcohol counseling, long-term foster care, transportation, recreation, and work readiness training. As Section IV of this report will show, runaway and homeless youth programs effectively provide a mix of comprehensive services to these at-risk or high-risk youth, and when possible their families.

Since the 1974 implementation of the federal runaway and homeless youth program, shelters have been improving the quality and scope of their services to these troubled young people. Community agencies, such as Boys Clubs, the Salvation Army, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, YMCA, YWCA and others have become actively involved in serving runaway and homeless children and youth.

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RATIONALE FOR THIS REPORT

Many media outlets, policymakers, and concerned groups have become interested in the scope and severity of the problems of runaway and homeless youth. A great deal of public interest in the plight of these children has been generated by feature stories on runaways in Parade, Life, Reader's Digest, The New York Times, and many other magazines and newspapers. Good Morning America, CBS Sunday Morning, ABC 20/20, Nightline, the USA Network and many other television and radio programs have carried segments on runaways during the past two years.

One important consequence of this media attention on youth problems is that key policymakers, community leaders, law enforcement officials, and others request more information than is contained in the media's case studies and anecdotes on individual runaway and homeless children. A need was identified for a national overview (with statistics) on the problems of these youth and how shelters help these youth.*

In November of 1984, the National Network Board of Directors instructed its staff to carry out a national survey and needs assessment of agencies which provide services to runaway and homeless youth. An eight page questionnaire was designed by National Network Board Members, staff, shelter directors, and volunteers with expertise in youth services. The questionnaire had three major sections. The first focused on the agency and its capacity for serving youth. The second requested numbers and information on the youth served. The third asked the agency to identify its program needs, success stories, and future priorities.

More than 900 questionnaires were distributed nationally; the exact number is impossible to determine as shelter administrators were encouraged to duplicate and circulate the questionnaire among their colleagues who had not received it. All member agencies of the National Network and all federally-funded runaway and homeless youth shelters were mailed the survey.

In February, 1985 preliminary survey results were released during the National Network's 11th annual symposium. Sections III and IV of this report represent the final numbers and findings. 210 agencies, representing more than 312 shelters and 230 foster homes serving

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*Parenthetically, readers of this report may be interested in two other documents: Runaway and Homeless Youth, National Program Inspection (October, 1983) and the FY 1983 Annual Report to the Congress on the Status and Accomplishments of the Centers Funded Under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (issued February, 1985). Both of these reports were prepared by the Office of Human Development Services/Department of Health and Human Services.

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runaways, responded to the survey. Respondents were from all 50 states and Puerto Rico.

To Whom Do They Belong? A Profile of America's Runaway and Homeless Youth and the Programs That Help Them, captures the results of this survey. The purpose of this report is to provide a current overview on the successes, needs, and types of runaway and homeless youth programs and the youth they serve. The National Network's intent is to inform policymakers, the media, and concerned groups and individuals about these cost-effective, crisis intervention services which are helping thousands of troubled young people and their families every day in every state of our nation.

III. METHODOLOGY

To Whom Do They Belong? A Profile of America's Runaway and Homeless Youth and the Programs That Help Them (hereafter referred to as TW) is the result of a pilot survey of 210 youth service agencies across the country. The purposes of this pilot survey were to:

1) generate data and descriptive information which would provide an up-to-date profile of the youth and the shelters.
2) find out what types of information shelters were or were not recording and what these data reveal.
3) trigger the National Network and youth shelters in gathering data which have not been kept, e.g. incidences of sexual abuse, suicide attempts, family service needs, staff training needs, and more.
4) use the findings from this survey to design a more appropriate data-gathering instrument with fixed-response categories.
5) use the narrative and anecdotal information to provide additional findings, future instrument questions, and clear up any ambiguities around present and future data systems.
6) determine whether there is a need for a more scientifically rigorous study.

More importantly in terms of the methodology, this study presents a national "profile" of these youth and services. That is, the design relies on nominal and ordinal level data from which only descriptive statistics can be derived. Specifically, the survey provided frequency distributions of program services, service needs, and numbers and types of youth served. The questionnaire and this research were not designed nor intended to provide detailed statistical inferences (e.g. causal relationships) between reporting categories. The "profile" is a summary of aggregate numbers and significant program needs. Expressed program needs will be noted as "significant" if more than 50% (105 of the 210) responding agencies identified the issue or problem as a need. "Other" program needs responses will include those with less than 50% response rate, yet are identified by such respondents as critical to their respective programs. It is important to remember that these expressed program/service needs are derived directly from the problems and needs which these runaway and homeless youth have when they arrive at the shelter.

To Whom Do They Belong? A Profile of America's Runaway and Homeless Youth and the Programs That Help Them is a profile of America's runaway and homeless youth and the shelters that serve them. The numbers and responses covering a one year period between 1983-1984 offer an up-to-date picture of these youth and the shelters.

IV. FINDINGS AND COMMENTARY

Survey Population & Numerical Results

By April 1985, the National Network had received surveys from 210 agencies which serve runaway and homeless youth. These agencies represent 312 separate shelter facilities and 230 individual foster care homes (for short and long term services to runaway and homeless youth). Of these 210 respondents,

- o 156 are funded, in part, by the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA). These 156 represent 60% of all the RHYA programs.
- o 194 are community-based, non-profit organizations; 14 are public/municipal agencies; 2 are Indian tribal organizations.
- o Shelters from all 50 states and Puerto Rico submitted surveys.

To serve the youth in their communities, these 210 agencies maintain 2,815 beds and employ 2,813 full and part time staff. It is important to note that these shelters require staff coverage 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. To complement the staff, these programs recruited 8,418 volunteers who gave 810,513 hours of volunteer time and services. Additionally, these programs generated $2,606,510 worth of in-kind services and non-cash donations.

These shelters each accessed an average of 5 public and private funding services in addition to RHYA funds. These include a mix of other federal funds, state and local government resources, United Way and Community Chest, foundation and corporate grants, contributions from civic and religious organizations, donations by individuals, and proceeds from the respective program's own fundraising efforts or entrepreneurial activities.

The shelters provide an average of 13 different types of service to these troubled youth and their families; either directly or in cooperation with an established referral arrangement. These types of services include:

- o Shelter care
- o Individual counseling
- o Outreach to youth
- o Education
- o Pre-employment training
- o Employment
- o Transportation
- o Mental health services

- o Health services
- o Foster care
- o Family counseling
- o Drug and alcohol counseling
- o Services in cooperation with juvenile court (restitution and diversion)
- o Independent living
- o Recreation
- o Community hotline services
- o Group counseling
- o Legal services
- o Missing children's assistance
- o Aftercare (for the youth after they leave the shelter)

Youth Population Served By the Respondents

These numbers reflect the youth served by the 210 programs for a one year period during 1983-1984. Specifically, these programs:

- o provided at least one night of shelter to 50,354 youth; 27,038 female, 23,316 male.
- o sheltered 19,411 runaways, 6,669 throwaways, and 24,274 other youth, e.g. abused and neglected children placed in the shelter by local child protective service agencies, juvenile court referrals, youth who left home by mutual consent, and other crisis intervention placements.
- o reported serving 5,682 cases of physically abused youth.
- o reported serving 3,439 cases of sexual abuse.
- o provided services to an additional 101,568 nonsheltered youth and/or their families, and responded to 171,931 hotline calls and contacts.
- o were forced to turn away 6,732 youth because the shelter was filled to capacity and there was no available bed space.
- o turned away 3,518 youth because it was determined that the shelter was not appropriate for the youth's needs.
- o had an average positive termination/placement rate of 57%, e.g. the youth were reunited with their families, placed in a foster care or group home, helped to attain an independent living arrangement, or placed in some non-secure detention program.

Expressed Program Needs: Significant

Agency and service needs expressed by the respondents regarding their respective agencies were determined to be "significant" if they were identified by more than 50% (105 of 210) of the respondents. The survey showed the following needs as most critical:

- Better salaries and benefits and more staff. 86% of the agencies cited the need for salary increases for staff and/or the need for more staff. Shelter directors noted that staff turnover was a problem due to low salaries: A caseworker earning $11,000/year is trained by the shelter to work with troubled youth and then leaves to work for a county agency and earn $18,000/year; a degreed counselor can earn more and work under much less stress at the local post office. In addition to the need for adequate salaries, respondents also noted the need for better trained staff, especially for the necessary 24 hour/day coverage. Directors stated that if runaway and homeless youth shelter programs had salary and fringe packages comparable to public and other social service agencies in their locale that these staff would be more likely to stay with the program.

- More Staff Training. 74% of the agencies cited the need for more staff training, especially for working with multi-problem youth and especially in those geographic areas where the shelter is one of the few, if not only, youth service providers. Among the complex "presenting problems" (those personal situations and difficulties the youth have when they arrive at the shelter) those needing the most counseling are incest victimization, sexual abuse, juvenile court involvement, drug and alcohol abuse (including parental abuse), school failure, and medical/dental needs.

- Continuum of services 72% of the agencies cited the need for more outreach, preventive services, and aftercare for the youth in their communities. Preventive services include working with schools, other youth agencies, and community groups to show young people that running away is not the best solution to their problems. Prevention also can include youth and family drop-in counseling and parent education. Outreach includes having streetworkers and other counselors available to go out in those areas of the community during the hours that youth congregate, and reach the youth "on their turf". Aftercare refers to those follow-up services which youth need after they complete their stay at the shelter, including counseling, education, employment services, family counseling and community referrals.

- **Independent Living programs.** 67% of the agencies noted that for many of their youth, especially older youth, age 16 and above, there is little chance of returning home, often no home at all, and little possibilitity of finding a foster home. Independent living programs offer a comprehensive mix of services including housing, life skills and money management, employment and training, remedial education, counseling, and other services. Independent living components of runaway and homeless youth shelters enable the staff to continue helping the youths following their stay at the shelter (maximum 15 days), and thereby increase the youths' probability of becoming self-sufficient rather than welfare-dependent.

- **Capital improvements of the shelter.** 62% of the respondents cited the need for major maintenance and capital improvements of their shelter facility. Shelters comply with state and local licensing, fire and safety, and health codes. Because most shelters are community-based home models, these facilities undergo the same kinds of wear and tear that family dwellings do. Furthermore, these upkeep costs are exacerbated by the sheer volume of youth, staff, and volunteers who use the facility. Federal guidelines limit the amount of RHYA funds which can be used for renovation to 15% of the federal grant. Frozen pipes, a broken heater and the need for electrical rewiring can cause havoc with even the most carefully designed budget.

Expressed Program Needs: Other

"Other" program needs are those which generated less than a 50% response rate (less than 105 of 210 agencies), but given the number of respondents and the compelling nature of the descriptions of these problems, seemed worth noting.

- **Mental health services.** 41% of the agencies cited the need for more mental health services for the youth and families they serve, particularly access to specialized mental health services, e.g. victims of sexual abuse and incest, suicidal youth, difficult juvenile court referrals, and multi-problem families.

- Foster care and long term placement. 38% of the programs identified the need for specialized foster care homes and other forms of long term placement for youth after they leave the shelter.

- Sexually abused children. 31% of the respondents cited an increase in the number of sexually abused children and youth coming to their shelters. They also identified the need for staff training and other resources for working with these victims.[5]

- Physically abused children. 29% of the programs cited an increase in the number of physically abused youth coming to the shelters.

- Substance abuse. 29% of the programs reported that drug, alcohol, and substance abuse were major problems for their youth.

- Education and employment. 28% of the programs cited the need for alternative education for their youth. 22% of the programs identified specialized employment and training programs as a need.

Are Youth More Troubled?

The survey asked programs to respond to the following question:

> "During the past year, National Network staff and others in Washington, D.C. concerned with runaway and homeless youth services and policy have heard comments from shelter staff to the effect that the youth they serve "are more troubled, have more serious problems, and require more specialized services" than the youth who were coming to the shelters 5 - 6 years ago. Does the experience of your program during the past year agree or not agree with this generalization? If it agrees, how? For example, some staff identify a greatly increased number of referrals from juvenile court; others note more youth with serious drug and alcohol problems have accelerated staff burn-out. What disturbing trends have you seen in the youth your agency serves and how has your program tried to address those problems?"

61.5% (129) of the programs responded that the youth they are serving seem more troubled and/or multi-problem than the youth they were serving 5-6 years ago.

1.5% (3) of the programs responded that the youth do not seem more troubled or difficult to serve.

37% (78) of the programs chose not to respond or else answered that it is difficult to ascertain a general sense of whether their youth clients are more troubled. Some respondents noted that their youth may seem more multi-problem only because staff had improved in their abilities to recognize and serve such troubled youth, or the community has greater expectations of the programs and refers more difficult cases to them.

COMMENTARY

The National Network's methodology for this study was not designed to generate casual inferences between specific survey answers and categories. The survey offers profiles of runaway, homeless, and other troubled youth and the shelters that serve them by compiling aggregate numbers, descriptive statistics, and anecdotal information. The National Network's intent also was to get a sense of what kinds of statistics shelters are keeping and examine what additional kinds of data shelters might consider recording.

One significant overall comment regarding the numbers included under "Survey Population and Numerical Results" earlier in this section is that several of the totals were under-reported. That is, several respondents noted that they do not keep records on such services, needs, and youth problems, e.g. the numbers of youth turned away, suicidal youth, hotline calls, homeless youth, incidence of sexual abuse, and other categories. Most of the 210 responses to the 8 page questionnaire reflected an adequate degree of recordkeeping by the shelters in terms of the numbers and types of youth. Adequate record-keeping is not a bureaucratic end in itself -- it is a valuable tool which shelter staff use to plan the most appropriate services for the youth, administrators use to determine the cost-effectiveness of their programs, and the agency uses to understand the problems and needs of youth and families in their respective communities.

Two of the most under-reported categories were abuse (physical and sexual) and the number of youth turned away due to no available bed space at the shelter. Many programs noted that some of the sheltered youth who the staff suspected had been physically and/or sexually abused were not counted in their agency's survey response because the abuse was not confirmed or disclosed by the youth during their stay at the shelter. Many youth do not admit to having been abused because they are afraid, either for their own safety or for what might happen to the individual(s) (often family members) who abused them. In some agencies question about abuse are not asked and if volunteered are not recorded due to philosophical policies about confidentiality. One program in New York, reporting 8,532 sheltered youth, is among those not questioning youth about abuse.

In terms of youth who were turned away due to a lack of bed space in the shelter, more than 60% of the respondents stated that they did not keep such records. The standard practice for handling such cases is that the filled-to-capacity shelter refers the youth to other shelters or programs in the area. In many communities, however "other" runaway and homeless youth shelters are few and far between.

The survey findings also dispel the notion that youth who come to runaway and homeless youth shelters are simply young people who are fretting over a routine adolescent squabble with their parents. The problems of these youth and their families are not simple. The reported levels of physical and sexual abuse (again, believed under-reported), the fact that 38% of the programs cited foster care/long term out-of-home placement needs for their youth, and the programs' expressed needs for more specialized mental health services and staff training indicate that shelters are working with youth and families who have serious and complex problems.

Another indicator of the multi-problem, "at-risk" nature of the youth is that the respondents identified 24,274 (48%) of the sheltered youth as having come to the shelter for reasons other than or in addition to being runaway or homeless. Specifically, many of these youth are placed in shelters by child protective service agencies because the youth have been physically exploited, abused or neglected. State and county child welfare agencies refer their youth clients to shelters while they await foster care, group home placement, or reunification with their families. A third segment of this "other" population are those youth who are placed in shelters by juvenile court and law enforcement officials while the youth await their hearings or court placements.

Many of these youth have been runaway, homeless, or on the street for some time, but are at the shelter because of their involvement with some other social service or juvenile justice system. The National Network informally refers to these youth as "systems kids". The successes and difficulties of shelters in working with these systems kids appears to be an issue worthy of further study and analysis. The need for basic education and independent living skills training are clearly priorities for this group.

MEASURES OF THE SHELTER'S EFFECTIVENESS

The survey results point to many acheivements and successes which runaway and homeless youth shelters across the nation have attained in working with troubled children, youth, and families. Some of the most notable findings include:

- 57% of the youth are reunited with their families or positively placed in a safe living environment. Similar to the earlier findings, this figure probably is lower than the actual number of youth whose lives and circumstances have been improved by virtue of their involvement with a shelter program. This number may be low in that shelter staff are not always able to maintain contact with and track the progress of the youth and their families for an extended period of time following the youth's stay at the shelter. Some programs had much higher positive placement rates than others. More research is needed to determine if this difference is a function of the intake criteria, the program policies and performance, or of the lack of long term resources available in the community for homeless youth.

  The major significance of this 57% figure is that it offers strong evidence that shelter programs are an effective way of preventing these youth from a future of welfare dependency, criminal activity, adult homelessness, and other personal and family tragedies which result in serious drains on taxpayers and the economy. As policymakers and social science researchers examine the relationship between child abuse, runaway behavior, crime, and unemployment, it is important to note that a nationwide system of community based runaway and homeless youth services exists which offers a cost-effective alternative to a future generation of adults and families who cannot contribute to our nation's economic health and well-being.

  Shelter programs, by virtue of the broad range of services which they provide, represent one of the most effective strategies for interrupting and closing off the apprenticeship of this generation of troubled youth into tomorrow's generation of homeless and disadvantaged adults.

- The shelters provide a comprehensive mix of an average of 13 types of services which is the most effective means of working with the multiple problems faced by these youth and families. One problem for traditional social service agencies that work with at-risk young people and families is that in many cases, those agencies have a somewhat limited scope of services. For example, child protective services have an investigative base and cannot provide services unless there is confirmed abuse or neglect. The criminal justice system cannot mandate services unless there is a "crime" and a violator of law. Public schools can only admit students who meet their jurisdictional requirements. Some agencies focus on employment and training, but have no remedial education services. Another agency may provide effective crisis intervention and counseling services, but not offer support services such as shelter care, follow-up or health services.

The 210 alternative agency respondents offer an average of 13 different types of services to the youth and families they work with, either directly at the shelter or through an established working relationship with another agency, e.g., health clinic, schools, recreation programs, and others. Resolution of an immediate crisis situation has a limited effect if the necessary support services such as follow-up family counseling, drug and alcohol abuse treatment, education, and other services are not available. By providing a mix of services to these youth and/or ensuring the youth's access to such an individualized package of services, shelter programs help young people turn their lives around by responding to their specific problems and needs.

Those private flexible agencies also serve their communities by filling the gaps that occur in services. In doing so they constitute a "window" into the service patterns and changing needs of high risk youth and families. Good trend reporting from those programs tuned to crisis intervention gives planners and funders insight into the emerging issues.

*Runaway and homeless youth programs are excellent examples of public/private partnerships at the federal, state, and community levels. Given the increasing competitivenes for federal and state funds, runaway and homeless youth shelters appear to be successful in leveraging a variety of funding sources and other resources in order to maintain the effectiveness of their services. Of the 156 respondents that receive funds under the Federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, their federal grants on the average represent 31.6% of their program's overall budget. A strong case can be made that this federal support validates the importance of these services to other funding sources, local local policymakers, and the overall community. Subsequent to the enactment of the RHYA in 1974, some states -- most notably New York, Florida, Texas, Oklahoma and Wisconsin have passed their own runaway and homeless youth laws which provide additional funds to shelters. The 210 respondents had an average of 5 other funding sources during 1983-1984.

Private sector funds from a diversity of corporations, foundations, family trusts, religious and civic organizations and other groups support runaway and homeless youth services in every state. But perhaps the strongest private sector confirmation of our nation's concern about these youth is demonstrated by the extent to which individuals volunteer and contribute their time, money and services. The survey showed more than $2.6 million worth of donated in-kind time and services and an additional 810,000 plus hours of volunteer time by more than 8,400 volunteers.

The diverse funding bases which shelter staff and Boards of Directors have worked hard to establish appear to satisfy even the most rigorous of imperatives that runaway and homeless youth programs must access the private sector and community resources if the shelters are to continue receiving public funds.

Additional commentary and analysis of the survey's findings are contained in the next section, "Conclusions and Recommendations."

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V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Briefly, other findings and conclusions from the survey included:

- Shelters and foster care programs in Pennsylvania, Hawaii, New York, and Kentucky are seeing a dramatic increase in the number of "throwaways" or "pushouts" -- young people who have been thrown out of their homes or are fleeing abuse by their parents. Programs in Iowa and Texas report an increase in the numbers of homeless /pushout youth as a result of the families' economic difficulties.

- Many shelters need more beds; programs have been turning away youth because their shelters were filled to capacity. Last year, an Arizona shelter had no space for 1600 youth; a Connecticut shelter turned away 546 youth and a Texas program 525 youth. Again, the National Network believes that the number of "turnaways" is even higher as 60% of the respondents said they do not collect this data.

- A tremendous need exists for comprehensive mental health services for runaway and homeless youth. Shelters in every state noted that they are seeing more youth with more severe mental health problems, including drug and alcohol abuse, suicidal tendencies, juvenile court involvement, family tensions, and psychiatric problems.

- Rural programs in Texas, Oklahoma, New York, and Wisconsin express the need for additional funds for staff and transportation to serve runaway and homeless youth in adjoining counties.

- Federal, state, and municipal funds expended for shelter services is money well-spent. The cost of shelter services is cheaper and more therapeutic than locking up youth in secure detention facilities. Community-based facilities such as runaway and homeless youth shelters are the most cost-effective and successful methods of helping the vast majority of high risk youth and families, although secure detention (a lock-up, restricted environment) may be necessary for those few serious offender/violent youth who are threats to the community's safety as well as their own.

- TW, in conjunction with other recent national studies, suggests that only 20%-25% of the runaway and homeless youth in the United States receive services from these programs and staff that have the ability and design to work with these multi-problem youth.

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Conclusions: Three major conclusions from the survey lead to the recommendations detailed at the end of this section. The survey finds that:

1. **Shelter programs serving runaway, homeless, and other troubled youth and their families work and work well.**

In the ten years since the Federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) was enacted in 1974, community-based services to runaway and homeless youth have become more sophisticated and responsive to the needs of these youth and their families. Shelters have broadened the types of services they offer, successfully competed for public and private funds, generated support and voluntarism in their own communities, received bi-partisan support from Congress, and most importantly have dealt effectively with an increasingly "at-risk" population of youth.

2. **Existing shelter programs have service and program needs.**

Implicit in the responses from the 210 agencies is the recognition that in order to maintain and strengthen their effectiveness, programs need more resources for specialized staff training, capital improvement of their facilities, increased capacity for more youth, adequate staff salaries, and additional service components. The need for complementary services for their existing system of services is probably the most crucial need in terms of having a sufficient mix of program responses to the diverse and severe youth and family problems which programs face.

3.
There are unserved and underserved communities across the nation that need the kinds of shelter and support services offered by runaway and homeless youth centers.

The vast majority of runaway and homeless youth centers are 7 - 12 bed, home-like shelters. Urban programs expressed the need for additional (but not larger) facilities; rural programs expressed the need for serving adjoining counties or unserved communities. Estimates on the number of youth who run away for only a few days and then return home range from 50% - 60% of the 1.3 million each hear. Many of these youth do come to shelters; 1983 HHS records show that 47.5% (26,690) of all youth sheltered in federally funded centers were short-term runaways. Yet even if these youth who can return home quickly are factored out, there are more than 600,000 youth who are away from home and vulnerable to predators on the streets unless they find safe shelters.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following five major public policy recommendations are derived from the survey and from analysis of the survey results by the National Network Board of Directors, members, and staff:

1. Congress and the Administration should increase the annual appropriation of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act to $[illegible] million so that additional shelters can be opened, existing programs can be strengthened to provide more comprehensive services to more troubled youth, and innovative training models and service strategies can be tested, all with the goal of reuniting more families.

2. State governments in states which do not have state runaway and homeless youth acts should follow the leadership of New York, Florida, Wisconsin, Texas, and other states which augment private and federal funds to serve these youth. Another recommendation is that those states (25) which have Children's Trust Funds (state operated quasi-endowment programs) for child abuse prevention programs should include adolescent abuse prevention programs as a funding category. States without Children's Trust Funds should implement them through legislation.

3. The Department of Health and Human Services, specifically its Administration for Children, Youth and Families (ACYF), should conduct further national studies and data collection activities on runaway and homeless youth and on the other types of youth, e.g. "systems kids", served by the shelters. The survey shows a need for more information about these youth and their families and about program models and service strategies that work best in helping these youth redirect their lives. ACYF should focus particularly on family dynamics which foster runaway/throwaway behavior, the numbers and causes of homeless youth, the incidence of chronic runaways, sexual abuse, and the need for specialized service components.

Equally as important as the gathering of this information is the distribution and marketing of the findings to runaway and homeless youth boards of directors and staff, federal, state, and local policymakers, school officials, law-enforcement officials, and other concerned groups.

4. Concerned policymakers, youth service professionals, and others must sustain a public education/media campaign which focuses on the problems and needs of these troubled youth. In order to strengthen and broaden the private sector and community support for services to these youthy, media coverage on the community and national level is necessary for improving services to these youth and their families.

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5. The need for coordinated and more efficient services (e.g. crisis intervention, protective services, child welfare, education, health, juvenile justice, job training, mental health, and others) at the federal, state, county, and community levels compels the National Network to recommend that Congress and the administration formulate and enact a "National Youth Policy", patterned after the Older Americans Act. A National Youth Policy would provide opportunities and protections for all of America's youth and would serve as a valuable tool for state and local governments to plan and administer their services to youth and their families at the lowest possible cost. This proposed concept of a national youth policy does not entail a new billion dollar federal entitlement program. Rather, a national youth policy will systematically coordinate existing youth programs and policies while creating a legislative framework in which remaining needs and problems can be addressed.

VI. EPILOGUE: THE KIDS BEHIND THE NUMBERS

This report began with some narrative descriptions about the kinds of runaways and homeless children and youth who are served by the 210 agencies that responded to our national survey. As the report detailed the major results and findings from the eight page questionnaire, a concern arose that the aggregate numbers, program needs, implications, and policy recommendations would blur and detract from our central focus --the problems and needs of each of the more than 1.3 million runaway and homeless youth in America each year.

Many readers of this report have seen the award-winning documentary film "Streetwise" which graphically portrays the tragic lives of juvenile prostitutes and other street kids in Seattle. Other readers also have seen the series of cover stories in *Parade* Magazine, articles in *Readers' Digest*, and feature stories about runaways on CBS, NBC, ABC, and Capitol Cities Television. Furthermore, millions of Americans have had first person experiences with runaway and homeless youth, ranging from having a family member who was a runaway to seeing such youth wandering aimlessly on the street.

This epilogue is offered as a reminder that behind the numbers in this study are the individual lives and futures of a generation of America's at-risk young people. In spite of all the various problems and negative situations in which these youth are involved, they have the same personal aspirations and goals that most other youth have --a good job, a healthy family, a safe place to live, and to be responsible, law-abiding adults.

Many of the youth counted in this survey are without homes and families. A significant number of others have bounced around in foster care, group homes, or other child welfare service placements. Others have fled or been forced out of their homes due to serious abuse, neglect, or breakdown of the family structure.

"To Whom Do They Belong" poses, in fact, a rhetorical question. The blunt fact is that these children and youth belong to all of us , i.e. if the necessary family support, shelter, and other services are not available for these youth, our society will only incur a greater economic liability in terms of paying for the welfare, institutional, law enforcement, adult homeless, metal health, and other inescapable services and programs.

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For many of the young people who seek help at runaway and homeless youth centers, their stay represents their 'last stop' in the social services/juvenile justice systems' [illegible] [illegible] before they became involved with or victimized by more serious problems. While the foremost goal of runaway and homeless youth shelter programs is to reunite these youth with their families, we have learned that in many cases this is not desirable or feasible. America is both a caring nation and a tax-paying nation; both of these factors necessitate support for the [illegible] of intervention and prevention services provided by runaway and homeless youth programs.

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VII. Further References

The National Network of Runaway and Youth Services receives requests from across the country from concerned individuals who want to know about books, magazines, and journals which focus on runaway and homeless youth. The bibliography below is not complete but it does offer some useful resources.

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ABOUT THE NATIONAL NETWORK AND THE NATIONAL FUND FOR RUNAWAY CHILDREN

The National Network is a nonprofit, membership organization of more than 500 community-based shelter programs and other agencies that serve runaway, homeless, and other troubled youth. The National Network started in 1974 when concerned people across the nation became aware of the urgent needs of children who were away from their homes and in danger on the streets. Parents, community leaders, social workers, and others developed shelter programs in their own areas to help these youth and their families. We then organized to assist each other's programs so that we could more effectively help these troubled, homeless youths.

Our foremost goal now is to improve services and policies which affect the lives of the more than 1.3 million runaway and homeless youth in America. Our national office in Washington, D.C. informs our members and other key groups and individuals on the best ways of serving these youths. We promote training and innovative strategies for working with such "high-risk" youth and their families to help them get their lives together.

We provide regular information through our newsletter, do special mailings, sponsor think tanks for youthworkers, and hold an annual symposium. Our nationwide, computerized telecommunications system enables youth programs to exchange information, research findings, and management improvements. Our public awareness campaigns through the media to citizens across the country helps them understand just how widespread and devestating the problems of these youth are. Finally, we monitor public policy which effects youth services at the national, state, and local levels.

The National Network relies on corporate and foundation grants, membership dues, and individual donors to carry out its work. We apply for and use federal funds only when the needs of the public agency match our youth services priorities.

The National Fund for Runaway Children began in 1982 following a series of articles in Parade magazine by Dotson Rader which graphically described the tragic stories of runaway and homeless street kids. These articles moved thousands of concerned individuals and groups to volunteer their time and donate money to help these troubled young people. Until October 1984, the National Fund was administered by Act Together, Inc., at which time the National Network became the legally responsible group.

The National Fund pools contributions from individuals, foundations, corporations, and other groups and makes grants to runaway and homeless youth programs. Since its inception, the National Fund has awarded grants to 53 agencies in 29 states and Washington, D.C. The National Fund also responds to thousands of requests from the general public and the media on the problems and needs of these youth. Finally, the National Fund provides support for a select number of public education projects. This report was printed and distributed with National Fund support.

The National Fund does not receive or use federal funds; all contributions are from private sources.

LIST OF RESPONDENTS

The National Network is grateful to the following youth services agencies for participating in our national survey. These programs are listed under headings for their respective federal regions.

Region I

The Youth Shelter, Greenwich, CT
Youth In Crisis, Bridgeport, CT
The Bridge, West Hartford, CT
Youth Consortium of TRI-RYC, New Haven, CT
Town of Framington, MA
New Beginnings, Greene, ME
Child & Family Services, Manchester, NH
TRI-CAP Group Homes, Warwick, RI
Stopover Shelters of Newport County, Portsmouth, RI
Spectrum, Burlington, VT

Region II

Crossroads, Mt. Holly, NJ
The Starting Point, Atlantic City, NJ
Project Youth Haven, Paterson, NJ
Anchor House, Trenton, NJ
Together, Inc., Glassboro, NJ
Girls Club of Clifton, Clifton, NJ
Group Homes of Camden County, Camden, NJ
La Casa Youth Crisis Shelter, Newark, NJ
Covenant House/Under 21, New York City
Society for Seamen's Children, Staten Island,NY
Westchester Children's Association, White Plains, NY
St. Agatha Home NY Foundling Hospital, Nanuet, NY
Nassau Children's House, Mineola, NY
Victims Services Agency, New York City
Runaway and Homeless Youth Advocacy Project, New York City
The Center for Youth Services, Rochester, NY
Programs and Domiciles, Oneida, NY
River Haven, Poughkeepsie, NY
Oneida County CAP, Rome, NY
Runaway Youth Coordinating Council, Hempstead, NY
Programa Casa/ Centro Sister Isolina Ferre, Ponce, PR

Region III

Valley Youth House, Bethlehem, PA
Centre County Youth Services Bureau, State College, PA
Tabor Children's Services, Doylestown, PA
The Bridge,Catholic Social Services, Wilkes-Barre, PA
The Whale's Tale, Pittsburgh, PA
Voyage House, Philadelphia, PA
Youth Resources Center, Hyattsville, MD
Boys and Girls Home of Montgomery County, Silver Spring, MD
Aid In Dover, Dover, DE
Oasis House/Family Services, Richmond, VA
Volunteer Emergency Foster Care, Richmond, VA
Alternative House/Juvenile Services of McLean, McLean, VA
Children's Home Society/Cherry Hill Shelter, Daniels, WV
Samaritan House, Wheeling, WV
MOVRYSC Shelter, Parkersburg, WV
Children's Home Society,Charleston, WV

Region III (cont.)

Patchwork/Daymark, Charleston, WV
Children's Home Society of West Virgina, Romney, WV

Region IV

Child and Family Services, Knoxville, TN
The Family Link, Memphis, TN
Crossroads/ Family & Children's Services, Chattanooga, TN
RAP House/Oasis House, Nashville, TN
Someplace Else/YMCA, Tallahassee, FL
Miami Bridge/Catholic Community Services, Miami, FL
Switchboard of Miami, Miami, FL
Youth and Family Alternatives, New Port Richey, FL
CAS, Inc., Gainesville, FL
Youth Alternatives, Daytona Beach, FL
Crosswinds, Merritt Island, FL
Beach Place Runaway Center, Tampa, FL
Youth Crisis Center, Jacksonville, FL
Alternative Human Services, St. Petersburg, FL
Sojourn, Mobile, AL
Shelby Youth Services, Alabaster, AL
Our House/Catholic Charities, Jackson, MS
Greenville Group Home for Boys, Greenville, MS
The Alcove, Monroe, GA
Southeastern Network of Runaway,Youth, & Family Services, Athens, GA
Athens Regional Attention Home, Athens, GA
YMCA Shelter House, Louisville, KY
Metro Group Homes, Lexington, KY
Brighton Center, Newport, KY
The Relatives, Charlotte, NC
Youth Care, Inc., Greensboro, NC
Mountain Youth Resources, Cullowhee, NC
Crossroads Runaway Shelter, N. Charleston, SC
Greenhouse Runaway Shelter, Sumter, SC

Region V

Walker's Point Youth & Family Center, Milwaukee, WI
The Runaway Project (RAP), Green Bay, WI
Bifrost, Menomonie, WI
The Runaway Bridge, LaCrosse, WI
Innovative Youth Services of Racine, Racine, WI
Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin & Upper Michigan, Superior,WI
Outagamie County Youth Services, Appleton, WI
Briarpatch, Madison, WI
Pathfinders, Milwaukee, WI
Family Service Division/Catholic Social Services, Monroe, MI
Counterpoint Runaway Shelter, Inkster, MI
The Sanctuary, Royal Oak, MI
Casa Maria, Detroit, MI
The Harbor, Port Huron, MI
Cory Place, Bay City, MI
New Life Youth Services, Cincinnati, OH
Junction Runaway Shelter, Elyria, OH
Safe Space Station, Cleveland, OH
Black Focus on the West Side, Cleveland, OH
Connecting Point, Toledo, OH

Region V (cont.)

Cross Streets, St. Paul Youth Services Bureau, St. Paul, MN
St. Croix Valley Youth Services Bureau, Stillwater, MN
The Bridge for Runaway Youth, Minneapolis, MN
Minneapolis Youth Diversion, MN
Stopover, Indianapolis, IN
Gary Youth Services Bureau, Gary, IN
Youth Services Bureau Runaway Shelter, South Bend, IN
The Blue Gargoyle, Chicago, IL
Haven, Winnetka, IL
Youth Organizations Umbrella, Evanston, IL
Latino Youth, Chicago, IL
TLP, Chicago, IL

Region VI

Youth Services of Tulsa County, Tulsa, OK
Tri-City Youth & Family Center, Choctaw, OK
Youth Services of Grady County, Chickasha, OK
Youth Services for Stephens County, Duncan, OK
Youth Services for Oklahoma County, Oklahoma City, OK
Great Plains Youth & Family Services, Hobart, OK
Okmulgee County Council of Youth Services, Okmulgee, OK
Youth & Family Services of Canadian County, El Reno, OK
Area Youth Shelter, Ada, OK
Muskogee County Council, Muskegee, OK
Cherokee Nation Youth Services, Tahlequah, OK
Youth & Family Resource Center, Shawnee, OK
Moore Youth & Family Services, Moore, OK
Payne County Youth Services, Stillwater, OK
Kiamichi Youth Services/McCurtain County, Idabel, OK
Youth Services of Bryan County, Durant, OK
Northwest Family Services, Alva, OK
Johnston Marshall County Youth Action, OK
Le Flore County Youth Services, OK
Cleveland County Youth & Family Center, Norman, OK
Youth Service Center of North Central Okalhoma, Enid, OK
Youth Services of Osage County, Pawhuska, OK
Junior Helping Hand Home for Children, Austin, TX
Isabel H. Elkins Emergancy Shelter, Houston, TX
Children's Center/Youth Shelter, Galveston, TX
Middle Earth Unlimited, Austin, Tx
Casa de los Amigos, Dallas, TX
Teen Connection, New Braunfels, TX
Space Emergency Youth Shelter, Fort Worth, TX
Grayson County Juvenile Alternatives, Sherman, TX
Chimney Rock Center, Houston, TX
Youth Services of Brazoria, Pearland, TX
Youth Alternatives, San Antonio, TX
Runaway Hotline, Austin, TX
Youth Alternatives/The Greenhouse, New Orleans, LA
Samaritan House, Baldwin, LA
Santa Fe Shelter Care, Santa Fe, NM
New Day Runaway House, Albuquerque, NM
Youth Home, Inc., Little Rock, AR
Stepping Stone, Little Rock, AR

Region VII

Youth and Shelter Services, Ames, IA
Foundation II, Cedar Rapids, IA
Oasis I, Salina, KS
Synergy House, Parkville, MO
Marian Hall, St. Louis, MO.
Youth Emergency Service, University City, MO
Youth Service System of Lincoln/Lancaster County, Lincoln, NB
Panhandle Community Service, Scottsbluff, NB
Youth Emergency Services, Bellevue, NB

Region VIII

Salt Lake County Youth Services Center, Murray, UT
Fargo Youth Commission, Fargo, ND
Charles Hall Youth Services, Bismarck, ND
Discovery House, Anaconda, MT
Missoula Youth Homes, Missoula, MT
Tumbleweed Runaway Program, Billings, MT
Attention, Boulder, CO
Volunteers of America/Bannock Shelters, Denver, CO
New Beginnings, Aberdeen, SD
Threshold, Sioux Falls, SD
Project Youth, Sheridan, WY
Laramie Youth Crisis Center, Laramie, WY

Region IX

YMCA Project Oz, Carlsbad, CA
Youth Services, Santa Cruz, CA
Youth Advocates 9 Grove Lane, San Anselmo, CA
San Diego Youth Involvement Project, San Diego, CA
High-Risk Youth Project, Los Angeles, CA
San Diego Youth & Community Services Gatehouse, San Diego, CA
San Diego Youth & Community Services Bridge, San Diego, CA
Gay & Lesbian Community Services Center, Los Angeles, CA
YMCA Project Oz, San Diego, CA
Community Congress of San Diego, San Diego, CA
Juvenile Crisis Resolution Program, San Diego, CA
Diogenes Youth Services, Sacramento, CA
Tahoe Human Services, South Lake Tahoe, CA
Xanthos, Alameda, CA
Interface Ventura County, Newbury Park, CA
Klein Bottle Social Advocates for Youth, Santa Barbara, CA
Options House/Hollywood Human Services, Hollywood, CA
Homeless and Emergency Runaway Effort, Chico, CA
Odyssey Program of Western Youth Services, Fullerton, CA
Youth ETC, Phoenix, AZ
Yuma County Child Abuse, Yjma, AZ
Open Inn, Tucson, AZ
Hale Kipa, Honolulu, HI
Hale Opio Kauai, Koloa, HI
The Salvation Army-Hilo Interim Home, Hilo, HI
Central Oahu Youth Services Association, Haleiwa, HI
Community Runaway and Youth Services, Reno, NV

Region X

Northwest Youth Services, Bellingham, WA
Thurston Youth Services Society, Olympia
Looking Glass Youth & Family Servcies, Eugene, OR
The Youthworks, Medford, OR
Harry's Mother/Janis Youth Porgrams, Portland, OR
Runaway Shelter Project, Salem, OR
Bannock House, Pocatello, ID
Family Connection, Anchorage, AK
Alaska Youth & Parent Foundation/Alaska Youth Advocates, Anchorage,AK
Family Focus, Fairbanks, AK

Senator **Hawkins**. I know you participated in a recent seminar on youth suicide sponsored by HHS. Can you tell us how many children served by the youth shelters are depressed or suicidal?

Ms. **Bucy**. Probably almost all of them. Maybe not suicidal, but it is pretty depressing to be out on your own and feel unwanted by your family.

The data that came from the New York study was that up to 66 percent of the children had either attempted suicide or seriously considered it. And that is one of the things in youth suicide, that you do not seriously consider ending your life unless you may very well do it. It is one of the real danger signs.

And the national network is working on a program to provide the kind of skills for staff so that they can question kids and can find out if they are that depressed. We are planning to supply them with materials they could use with young people to ease that hopelessness.

There are also several programs that are funded by HHS in the runaway centers to work with suicide prevention. It is something we take quite seriously.

Senator **Hawkins**. In your judgment, are there really any adequate national statistics on the number of runaway, homeless, or exploited children?

Ms. **Bucy**. I do not think there really are. And I think they are difficult to come by. But part of the difficulty has been what I referred to before as this tension between Government agencies that refuse to use each other's definition. I think that we need to get more complex categories, or within a category, to get some clear definitions.

For instance, a "runaway" right now is defined as a child who leaves his home without the parents' permission. What home? Many children have several homes, as their parents have married and remarried, and there are extended families and grandparents. Also, that does not pick up at all on the children who leave institutional or foster care. And I suspect that is a very, very high number of those children. No effort has ever been made to establish what that is.

"Homelessness" is not very clearly defined. It is a situation where a child does not have a home to go to. Is that because they have fallen through the cracks of the child protective or the juvenile justice system which, having taken them away from their home, in some way at least tells the parents they do not have to worry with those bad kids any longer? Does it include those children who are emancipated at an early age? In some States, legally, the State can emancipate children and send them on their own at 14 or 15 years old. Does it include children who are forced out by their parents?

The forceout, the throwaway, is very difficult. For one thing, my experience has certainly been that when a child comes into a shelter, to say, "Did your parents throw you away?" is a little bit of a heavy-duty question. As children tell their stories, what happens is they blame themselves

I talked to a young woman who was chained to a bed and beaten with a whip and sexually abused by seven men in her family, because she was a very bad girl. She did not see them as being out-of-line. She did not even see them as treating her in a way she had not deserved. She was not real sure what she had done to deserve this, but she was quite sure that it was because she was a bad girl. They had repeatedly told her that.

So children often do not have a very clear notion of what has happened to them. Many of them from the staffpersons' point of view, or a skilled person in listening to the story, will see that child as a throwaway child while the young persons themselves, loving their parents and wanting to return home, will not announce, "I am a throwaway."

So I think we are going to have to get some clear definitions. I would like definitions that are not pejorative. You know, "runaway" sort of scapegoats the youth; "throwaway" scapegoats, the parent. We need definitions of behavior that do not assume who was at fault, but simply describe what is going on. We need to find out with the missing children, how many of those are voluntarily missing and how many are only nextdoor for a few hours. We need also to look at the exploitation of those youth who, as the little girl in the film, wander in and out of a very uncaring home.

This is going to be complex to do, but I do not think it is all that difficult. And to me, the need to do it should overweigh the complexities. We should all work together on getting good data.

Senator HAWKINS. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, has been promoting policies of secure detention or staff-secure facilities to work with chronic runaways, many of whom are involved in street crime and juvenile prostitution.

What is the national network's position on the issue of these detention policies?

Ms. BUCY. We feel that locking children up has never scared them straight. If the notion is that we are going to deter children from running, particularly chronic runners, by putting them in a secure place, that they will dread that so much they will not run, or having had this experience, that they will run, again. We are wrong. Running is a much more complex behavior than is suggested by that theory.

Runners often need to be slowed down so they can be given a good assessment and people can understand what the problems are. Putting them in a secure detention simply removes them, usually, from any opportunity for real assessment, or from any work that would come after that, along with making the child feel, "Now I have experienced the worst, and this is not so bad. There is not much else they can do to me"—although for many children, being locked up is depressive, and the suicide rates certainly go up in locked facilities.

We come down very strongly on the side that good programs for these kids almost cure the problem of kids running away. We have many, many programs that do not have many young people that leave—some of them, that have no young people that leave the program, because there is something there for them.

I have also never talked to a program provider—and it was certainly true in my own experience—so many more kids self-refer themselves to shelters than ever run away from shelters. So that if we make them secure places so that a child cannot escape, we will leave more children on the street because they will not bring themselves into that, or the rules of the game will be so that they cannot be self-referred.

I know it is a difficult problem. I have never encountered a child who needs to be locked up for society's protection who has not committed a crime. It would be better to be accused of the crime if they are drug-dealing or if they are prostituting. Those things are against the law. Why don't the police do good police work and accuse them of what they have done that is against the law. Locking kids up because of reasons that are vague to them is seen as just another part of a crazy system. I think that children who have broken the law certainly need to face the music on that, and that we have to do good police work. Also there are children who need, for their own safety, good mental health services, which are very, very difficult to come by.

Mental health services in this country have very, very high dollar marks, and young people are excluded from those more than any other group, for a couple of reasons.

One is that we allow young people to do things that would be considered crazy if little kids did them, or if people in their twenties did them. But somehow or other, we say, "Oh, adolescents, you know, it is kind of a crazy time," and we let young people go right on doing very self-destructive things. We do not have to do that. Those children who are of danger to themselves do not need to be in a criminal justice setting. They need to be in a mental health setting. We need to provide ways that that can happen, even if the family does not have insurance, or even if the child is a part of the State system and cannot access the expensive care that they need.

That to me makes a whole lot more sense than a cheap way out, designed to make the adults in the situation feel better.

Senator **Hawkins**. Do you know how many children you had to turn away last year because there simply was no room in the shelters?

Ms. **Bucy**. A number was in our study, and we could get you the exact figures. It was around 8,000 children who were turned away because there was no room, and another 3,000, I believe, who were considered inappropriate, usually because of mental health problems or violence, that made them unsafe in shelters.

There are shelters—Tom Patania just spoke of them who never turn kids away; they fit them in some way or other—and I think that is great, and that is pretty much what I always did. I figured I could stare down the licensing people just about as well as that child could stare down the dangers on the street. But we are putting our programs in jeopardy if we suggest that they exceed their license limits.

Senator **Hawkins**. Congress did recently fund a Child Abuse Challenge Grant Program for States that establish children's trust funds. Are runaway and adolescent programs eligible to receive funding from these children's trust funds?

Ms. **Bucy**. It is our understanding that they would be eligible, but that nobody is funding them except one program in Wisconsin. This is a system that has grown up as a result of the advocacy of people who have focused mostly on younger children's issues, and prevention programs for adolescents have not been funded.

The national network has a project working on that, too, and we really hope to break into that system. We hope to help the children's trust fund people increase their income—many of them are based on a check-off on the State income tax—and we would like to get the word around so there will be more money in those, and we would like to access some of that money for adolescent programs. We appreciate Senator Dodd's work on the Challenge Grants

Almost all of the child abuse statistics indicate that adolescents are perhaps the most vulnerable and the most often-abused, and they die almost with the same rate from child abuse as any other group except those children under 1 year old. More adolescents, in other words, are killed than 4- or 5-year-old children. But most States have put them at the bottom of their priorities.

Senator **Hawkins**. Well, we appreciate your contributing to this testimony; you are a grand partner and a great example. You know whereof you speak. And certainly, I have had a wonderful experience working with you. We appreciate the talent, the love, and the many, many years' experience you have brought to this job. Your report, "To Whom Do They Belong?" should be "must" reading for every citizen of this country, prior to their watchng the evening network of entertainment programs.

We know we have a problem, and we would like to solve it. Thank you for your participation.

Ms. **Bucy**. We certainly appreciate your efforts, Senator.

[An additional statement supplied for the record follows:]

The SOUTHEASTERN NETWORK of Runaway, Youth and Family Services, Inc.

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TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON CHILDREN, FAMILY, DRUGS, AND ALCOHOLISM - UNITED STATES SENATE

On Behalf of the Southeastern Network of Runaway Youth and Family Services

By: Sara V. Jarvis, Project Director
Southeastern Network of Runaway Youth and Family Services
Missing Children's Project

The Southeastern Network, an organization of over 40 runaway programs in the eight southeastern states is committed to the development and maintenance of high quality community based services for youth and their families. The Southeastern Network's Missing Children's Project, of which I serve as Project Director, is designed to link existing runaway services with missing children's activities. The project works on state and local levels to assess the needs of missing children and their families and to coordinate services for them. It is our belief that such linkages, which recognize and value both the expertise of existing services and the enthusiasm of new services, are essential if issues as complex as those surrounding missing children are to be resolved. It is the necessity of these linkages, in all programming for youth and families, that I will try to address.

There can be no doubt in the minds of the members of the Subcommittee that youth and families in this country are in pain. Startling statistics abound on the increasing numbers of abused and neglected children, on the incidence of alcoholism and drug abuse among both adults and children, and on the thousands of children who leave their homes each month choosing the unknown dangers of the streets over the known dangers of home. It is clear that youth and families need help. It is not clear exactly what sort of help is most effective or just who is best prepared to provide it. That is because no one person, agency, or organization is prepared to meet those needs.

Young people and families in trouble typically do not suffer from one problem. Their problems compound and multiply and, if ignored long enough, the individual and/or the family break down. To identify the straw that breaks the camel's back as the culprit is to deny the role of all the others. Unfortunately, too many of our human service programs make this mistake. They remove the straw and send the patient home. Such simplistic remedies are as irresponsible as they are ineffective.

When a child runs away, there are typically a wide range of contributing problems that, building one upon the other, lead to actually running away as a temporary solution. When a child is abducted by a none custodial parent, there are a multitude of precipitating factors inherent in the strained relationships of the custodial and noncustodial parents. To simply send the runaway home or return the abducted child to the custodial parent is to contribute to an escalating cycle of negative behaviors and to risk a larger and more dangerous emotional explosion in the future. Only through a concerted effort to look carefully at individuals and families in pain, to see the problems and resources that are not immediately visible, and to seek assistance from others, can the providers of human services begin to really help.

Runaway centers have been making such a concerted effort for the past 10 years. Runaway centers are experts in individual and family assessment, in brokering for resources, and in linking with relevant agencies and organizations to improve service delivery. Runaway centers are not the solution to all the problems of youth and families, but they provide an effective and proven model for addressing the multiple and varied needs of people in pain.

Careful examination of a runaway center will yield five characteristics which, I believe, are basic to the effective and responsible delivery of services. These five characteristics could well serve as criteria for evaluation of other programs proposing to serve youth and families.

Small Community Based Services

Runaway centers are typically small human sized programs. Bed space is purposefully limited to 20 or less to ensure that youth are not lost in or threatened by the institutional systems of a large program. These programs are firmly implanted in their communities. Their services arose from an expressed need in the community and through their active pursuit of community participation in governance, programming, and service delivery, runaway centers stay atuned to changes in community needs. Because they are small, runaway centers are flexible, and as a result, are able to rapidly adapt as the community changes. This flexibility and responsiveness make runaway centers vanguards in the youth and family service field. They are outfront, sensing and responsing to problems as they arise.

Any program purporting to serve youth and families must have a firm base inside the community it serves, and must be small enough to be approachable. People resist using services that don't belong to them or that are imposing in size.

Active Two-Way Linkages with Other Agencies

Runaway centers recognize they do not know it all and cannot do it all. They are simply not adequate staff, space, or time in one agency to address the multiple needs of youth and families. Linking, formally and informally, with other human service agencies, with law enforcement officials, with members of the medical establishment, and with numerous other public and private organizations, provide the runaway centers with an expanded range of resources. Clients benefit from a comprehensive referral system which links them into needed services. Agencies benefit from shared cross-training and information sharing which prepares them to better assess and respond to client needs.

All programs working with young people and their families must establish and maintain active linkages with other agencies. Those linkages must work in both directions, with shared training, shared resources, and mutual respect.

Outreach

People in pain close up. Typically, they have been hurt by those close to them and by strangers. They respond by shutting others out. They stop looking for help and concentrate on defending themselves. Runaway centers recognize the necessity of reaching out to those young people who will not call to request service or walk through the front door. Centers have active outreach programs which include street work, posting flyers, initiating public service announcements, and speaking to groups of young people and parents. These outreach programs are designed to carry runaway center services into the community.

Programs who want to serve those in pain, must likewise recognize people's resistance and reluctance to seek help and must develop programs that reach out over those barriers.

Treatment of Whole Persons

Runaway centers look at the presenting problems of youth and their families as the beginning rather than as the end point. Center staff assume the needs and problems are larger and more complex than they appear and, invariably, as trust develops between the center staff and the young people and their families, these assumptions are born out. It becomes clear that dad's unemployment has led to his increased drinking, and that his drinking has caused him to physically abuse his son and that the son's response has been to run away. If dad's unemployment and drinking problem are not addressed, the son's runaway cycle will continue. Though most runaway centers do not have inhouse alcohol treatment and adult employment programs, most do have linkages with agencies that have such programs and can quickly make the necessary referrals.

All programs should carefully assess the real problems of youth and families and should be prepared to address those problems quickly--either directly with inhouse services or indirectly through referral.

After Care

Once the immediate crisis is resolved, it is tempting to forget about the whole event and get back to life as usual. Unfortunately, this is impossible. Crisis resolution is just that and nothing more. Runaway centers recognize that a crisis is a time of opportunity for growth and change, but, that without careful follow-through, the gains achieved can be lost. Accordingly, runaway centers provide after care services to youth and families. These services continue for weeks or months after the crisis has ended and are designed to help the family stabilize and practice it's new skills. Failure to provide such services, directly or through formal agreements with other agencies, reduce the chances of an ultimately successful resolution of the problem.

Programs must recognize the need for a full range of care which reaches beyond the resolution of the immediate crisis and must ensure such care is available and is regularly incorporated into case planning.

The five characteristics listed above are common to most runaway centers and have proven to be essential in the successes documented by those centers. The Federal Government has supported and encouraged runaway centers in their development and has played a major role in ensuring centers' compliance with these and other standards. I urge the Subcommittee to remember these characteristics when considering new programs and to measure new programs for runaways, homeless youth, missing children and alcohol and drug abusers against these standards. There was a reason for the success of runaway centers in serving youth and families, and that success is replicable.

Senator **Hawkins**. Thank you

[Whereupon, at 12:25 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

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